Celebrating 20 Years
1971 - 1991

Alberta's Natural Areas

A guide to selected sites

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Alberta
FORESTRY, LANDS
AND WILDLIFE

93-02110/

ALBERTA'S NATURAL AREAS: A GUIDE TO SELECTED SITES

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INFORMATION ON ALBERTA'S NATURAL AREAS, CONTACT:

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9915 - 108 Street
Edmonton, Alberta
T5K 2C9

Phone: (403) 427-5209
To call toll-free, contact the RITE operator listed in your local telephone directory under Government of Alberta.

OR

Contact any regional office of Alberta Forestry,
Lands and Wildlife.

"Partners in Conservation"

This first guide to selected Natural Areas has been produced in recognition of the Natural Areas Program's 20th anniversary. Updates to this guide are planned, with more sites to be added.

Natural Areas are established under the *Wilderness Areas, Ecological Reserves and Natural Areas Act*. Albertans, as of October 1991, have 118 legislatively established Natural Areas and an additional 154 sites under consideration for Natural Area status.

The establishment and appropriate use of Natural Areas since 1971 provides a record of land conservation in which all Albertans can take pride. A number of "Partners in Conservation" have contributed to the success of the Natural Areas Program, including the public who often work toward the establishment of new sites, the Volunteer Stewards who help to monitor existing Natural Areas, and the staff of Alberta Forestry, Lands and Wildlife.

The Mission Statement of Alberta Forestry, Lands and Wildlife states, "As stewards of Alberta's fish, wildlife, forests and public lands, our mission is to manage for sustainability, the integrated use of resources and a healthy environment in harmony with the needs of Albertans." The Natural Areas Program is, and will continue to be, an important component of this mission.

Contents

Introduction 1

The Natural Areas Program 2

Volunteer Steward Program 4

Alberta's Natural Regions 6

Using this Guide to Natural Areas 13

Maps 14

Sample Natural Area Site Description 15

Habitat Types 17

Key to Habitat Type Symbols 18

Site Facilities 19

Key to Facilities Symbols 20

Guidelines for Users 21

Guide to Selected Natural Areas 23

Grassland Region 25

Parkland Region 29

Boreal Forest Region 63

Rocky Mountain Region 85

See next page for Alphabetical Listing of Sites included in this guide.

Alphabetical Listing of Sites in this Guide

Astotin 64
Beaverhill 30
Beehive 86
Bellis 66
Big Sagebrush 88
Bilby 32
Burtonsville Island 68
Butcher Creek 34
Canmore Flats 90
Coyote Lake 70
East Porcupine 92
Fourth Creek 36
Halfmoon Lake 72
Holmes Crossing 74
Innisfail 38
J.J. Collett 40
Kimiwan Lake 76
Kleskun Hill 42
La Saline 78
North Cooking Lake 44
Outpost Wetlands 46
Paintearth Coulee 48
Parkland 50
Police Point 80
Red Rock Coulee 26
Riverlot 56 52
Saskatoon Mountain 54
Sherwood Park 56
Sylvan Lake 58
Wagner 60
White Earth Valley 82
Wildcat Island 94

Introduction

Alberta has a wealth of natural landscapes, including flat prairie grasslands, glacier-topped mountains, rolling forested hills and broad river valleys. Many areas of the province, however, have been changed significantly by human activities. Native vegetation is often replaced by cultivated species and the food and shelter required by wildlife may no longer be available. As human populations increase and more agricultural, industrial and natural resource extraction activities take place in Alberta, protected natural landscapes become more and more valuable.

Natural Areas have been protected throughout the province so that current and future generations will have the opportunity to experience and appreciate their natural features. This guide has been produced to assist you in exploring a sampling of Alberta's most interesting and well-established Natural Areas. Each description includes information on the location of the site and the natural features and facilities you will find there.

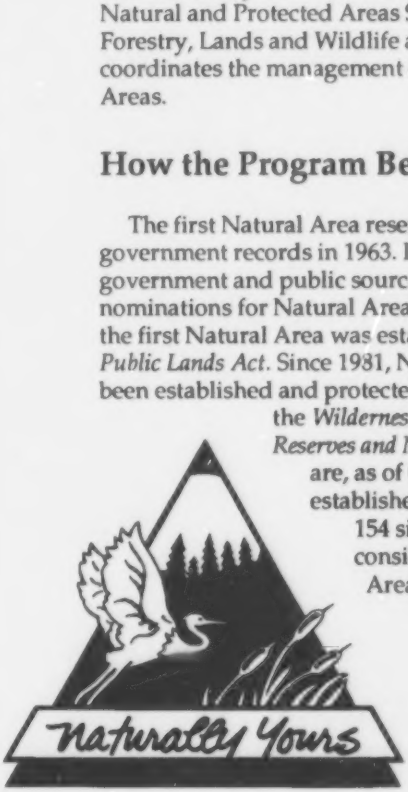
Natural Areas serve to protect rare or uncommon plants such as this alpine species, the spider plant.

The Natural Areas Program

Natural Areas are protected parcels of public land. They contain features that represent aspects of the biological and physical diversity of the province. Compared with other conservation sites, Natural Areas straddle the middle, between strictly protected lands, where many human activities are prohibited, and intensively developed recreation sites. Natural Areas offer Albertans opportunities for nature appreciation, environmental education, natural history research and outdoor recreation. The Natural and Protected Areas Section of Alberta Forestry, Lands and Wildlife administers and coordinates the management of Alberta's Natural Areas.

How the Program Began

The first Natural Area reservation was placed on government records in 1963. In 1967, academic, government and public sources provided nearly 150 nominations for Natural Areas in Alberta. In 1971 the first Natural Area was established under the *Public Lands Act*. Since 1981, Natural Areas have been established and protected by legislation under the *Wilderness Areas, Ecological Reserves and Natural Areas Act*. There are, as of October 1991, 118 established Natural Areas and 154 sites under consideration for Natural Area status in Alberta.



The "Naturally Yours" logo was developed for the Natural Areas Program in 1989.

How are Natural Areas Used?

The uses allowed on each Natural Area vary. Management of each site is designed to meet as many needs of the public as possible, and to ensure the site's long-term protection. Local residents are often involved in developing site-specific management plans to guide decisions made for a particular Natural Area. Recreationists such as cross-country skiers, snowshoers, hikers, hunters, fishermen, berry pickers, bird-watchers, photographers, horseback riders and nature observers are encouraged to use Natural Areas - with care. Schools and organized groups using Natural Areas for outdoor education, recreation or training exercises are also welcome.

Management of Natural Areas

The general philosophy of site management for Natural Areas is to encourage appropriate activities and discourage unsuitable uses which damage natural features. This philosophy is communicated through program brochures, displays and signage. Gates, fencing and group gathering areas are established on some sites to provide boundaries. The Natural and Protected Areas Section encourages visitors to accept responsibility for their activities and to respect a site's natural values. In this way, site protection will become a reality.

Volunteer Steward Program

Management of Alberta's widely dispersed Natural Areas is a challenging task. The Volunteer Steward Program was initiated in 1987 to improve on-site monitoring and management of Natural Areas and to increase public involvement in the Natural Areas Program.

What do Volunteer Stewards do?

Volunteer stewards assist Alberta Forestry, Lands and Wildlife staff by monitoring the condition of Natural Areas. Their roles are to observe, record and report activities occurring within their assigned sites. Volunteer stewards have also undertaken breeding bird surveys, mapping of rare species or special features, organizing annual site cleanups and planning and developing trail systems. Some stewards have formed nonprofit societies to carry out management duties and to acquire grants to undertake special on-site projects.

Support for Volunteer Stewards

Staff of the Natural and Protected Areas Section, as well as Alberta Forestry, Lands and Wildlife field staff, provide technical advice and support to the volunteer steward in monitoring the Natural Area. An information kit, including maps, air photos, site information and inspection forms is provided to each steward. A newsletter is mailed quarterly to participants and includes information updates, natural history notes and profiles of stewards and specific sites. A conference is held periodically to allow stewards to meet one another, compare notes and learn more about conservation and the management of Natural Areas.

How to Get Involved

Volunteer stewards come from all walks of life, yet they share an interest in helping to protect Alberta's natural heritage. They make a valuable contribution to the protection and management of Natural Areas. If you would like to become a part of the Volunteer Steward Program, please contact the Volunteer Steward Coordinator for further information.

(See page ii for information on contacting the Volunteer Steward Coordinator of the Natural and Protected Areas Section of Alberta Forestry, Lands and Wildlife.)

Volunteer Stewards make observations in their assigned Natural Area and report their findings.

Alberta's Natural Regions

In Alberta long term patterns of climate have resulted in the development of major soil zones across the province. Differences in soils, temperature and precipitation have resulted in the development of characteristic types of vegetation in each soil zone. In recognizing these patterns of climate, soils and vegetation, six major Natural Regions have been identified in Alberta – the Grassland, Parkland, Foothills, Rocky Mountains, Boreal Forest and Canadian Shield.

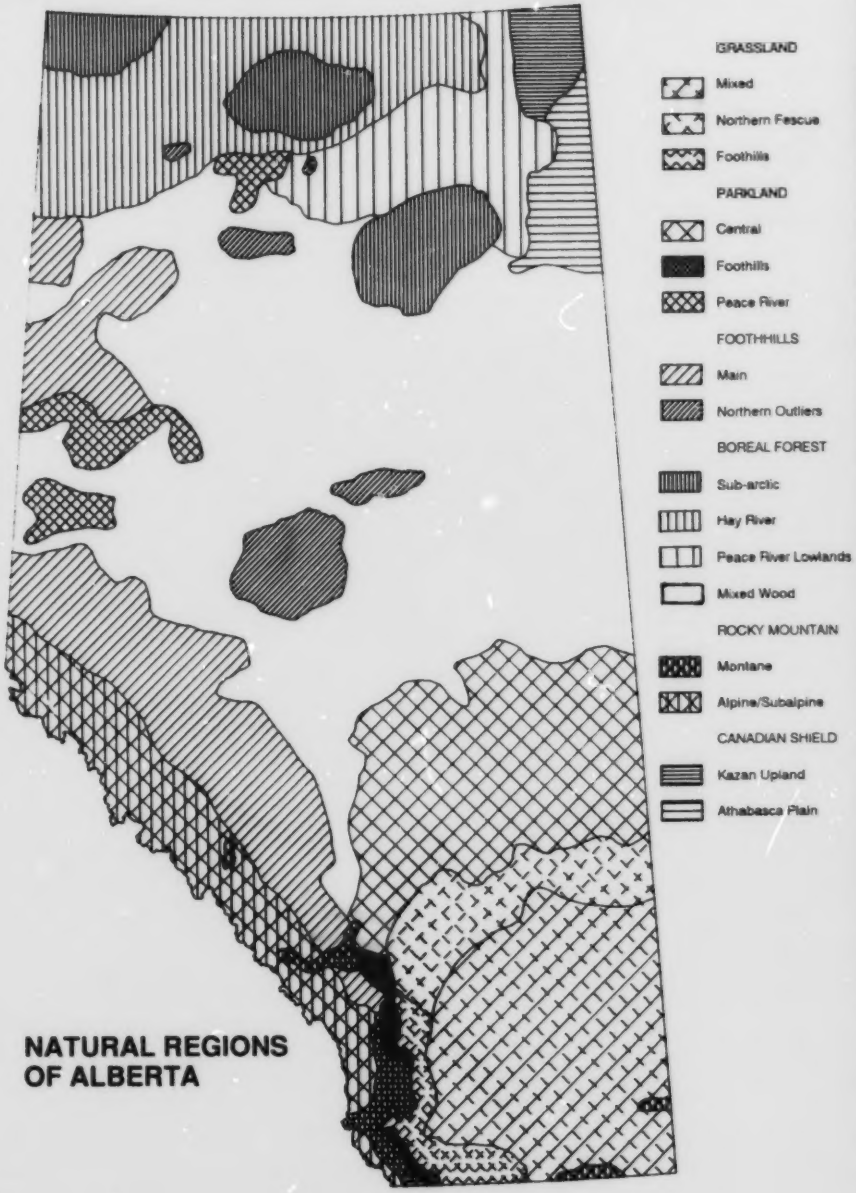
Each Natural Region has been further divided into several subregions. While Natural Regions indicate similarities in natural features on a province-wide scale, the location of subregions is based on similarities in vegetation patterns and landscapes on a more regional scale within each Natural Region.

The map on the next page shows the six Natural Regions and the subregions into which they have been further divided. The following descriptions outline some of the natural features of each of Alberta's Natural Regions.

Grassland

Cold winters, warm summers, high winds and low precipitation characterize the Grassland Natural Region. In the southeast, where conditions are warmest and driest, Brown soils have developed. In the cooler and wetter areas, farther north and west, Dark Brown and shallow Black soils are found.

The plants that grow in the Grassland have adapted to the severe moisture shortage of mid-to-late summer. In the flat to rolling landscape of the southeast, blue grama grass, spear and wheat grass are common. Some drought-tolerant shrubs occur, such as sagebrush, rabbit brush and greasewood. In shaded ravines, moisture-loving shrubs such as buckbrush, silverberry, saskatoon and choke cherry can be found.



NATURAL REGIONS OF ALBERTA

Near the foothills, and on the northern edge of the Grassland, cooler summer temperatures, deeper snow cover and more precipitation support a lush plant growth. Rough fescue and Parry oat grass are dominant, and many colourful forbs grow among the grasses. Shrubs such as aspen, choke cherry, saskatoon and rose are common in these areas, as well.

Bird and animal life abound in the Grassland, particularly where permanent water bodies or wetlands occur. Birds of the Grassland include Clark's grebe, cinnamon teal, turkey vulture, Swainson's hawk, ferruginous hawk, sage grouse, burrowing owl, short-eared owl, horned lark, Sprague's pipit, Brewer's sparrow, Baird's sparrow, lark bunting, chestnut-collared longspur, McCown's longspur and western meadowlark. Nuttall's cottontail, swift fox, long-tailed weasel and pronghorn are mammals that may be seen. Amphibians and reptiles of the Grassland include plains spadefoot, great plains toad and prairie rattlesnake. The eastern short-horned lizard and plains hog-nose snake are found only in the southeast.

Parkland

The Parkland Natural Region is transitional in climate and ecology, separating the Grassland in the south from the Boreal Forest to the north and the Rocky Mountain area to the west. Compared with the Grassland, the Parkland receives more precipitation, particularly during the summer, and has lower winter temperatures and a longer period of snow cover.

Aspen groves are intermingled with rough fescue grassland in the Parkland. At one time, areas of grass were more extensive due to fires set annually by the Natives of the area. This burning encouraged the growth of grasses that were important in maintaining bison herds hunted by the Natives. Most of the Parkland has now been settled and cultivated.

Dark Brown and Black soils are common here. In the aspen groves, shrubs such as buckbrush, rose, saskatoon, silverberry, beaked hazelnut and choke cherry are common. The fescue grasslands contain many species of flowering forbs, some of which are also found in the adjacent aspen groves. Sloughs and small lakes are abundant, characterized by a ring of cattail and bulrush in the shallow water and a ring of sedge, grass and willow beside the water.

The intermingling of aspen groves and woodland, rough fescue grassland and small water bodies provides habitat for many species of birds and animals. Common goldeneye, bufflehead, red-tailed hawk, northern saw-whet owl, red-eyed and warbling vireo, white-breasted nuthatch, rose-breasted grosbeak, song sparrow and Lincoln's sparrow can be seen in the Parkland. Snowshoe hare, Richardson's ground squirrel, jumping mouse, ermine and white-tailed deer are common mammals. Amphibians and reptiles include tiger salamander, Canadian toad, wood frog, red-sided garter snake and wandering garter snake.

A small area of Parkland occurs in the Peace River region of northwest Alberta. This area is drier and warmer than the surrounding Boreal Forest Natural Region, with conditions more typical of central Alberta.

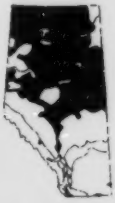
Foothills

The higher elevation of the Foothills Natural Region results in cool summer temperatures. However, because this Natural Region often escapes the severe cold of Arctic air masses, winter temperatures tend to be warmer than in portions of the Boreal Forest and Parkland. Gray Wooded soils are the most common type in the Foothills.

Lodgepole pine is the dominant tree species because it can effectively invade an area after there has been a fire. Frequent forest fires have ensured healthy stands of lodgepole pine throughout the Foothills. White spruce and alpine fir can be found in older stands that

have escaped fire for long periods of time. In the forests along the Region's eastern edge, aspen, balsam poplar and white spruce commonly occur with lodgepole pine. Black spruce and sphagnum moss peatlands are common in poorly drained depressions.

The Foothills Natural Region provides excellent habitat for many mammals including coyote, gray wolf, black bear, marten, Canada lynx, elk (wapiti), deer and moose. The forests and river valleys provide habitat for a variety of bird species, including northern goshawk, northern flicker, gray jay, common raven, red-breasted nuthatch, pine grosbeak, purple finch and crossbills. Amphibians and reptiles of the Foothills include boreal toad, wood frog, red-sided garter snake and wandering garter snake.



Boreal Forest

The Boreal Forest is Alberta's largest natural region. Compared with other areas, the Boreal Forest has the coldest winters and the greatest range between summer and winter temperatures. Most of the precipitation falls as rain during the summer, and this encourages tree growth. Soils are primarily Gray Wooded, with large areas of Organic soils occurring, as well.

In central and southern areas, aspen and balsam poplar are the dominant trees of the upland forest, with white spruce common in older stands. White spruce becomes increasingly dominant in the forest cover of the northern portions of the Boreal Forest. Closer to the Foothills, lodgepole pine and white spruce mix with the poplars in the forest canopy. In the dry and sandy areas of the central part of the Natural Region, jack pine forest is common.

Sphagnum moss and black spruce peatlands have developed in many wet areas, while tamarack and brown mosses are characteristic of even wetter sites.

Large mammals such as gray wolf, black bear, elk (wapiti), deer, moose and woodland caribou can be seen in the Boreal Forest. Birds in these northern forests include ring-necked duck, broad-winged hawk, red-tailed hawk, spruce grouse, northern hawk owl, great gray owl, winter wren and songbirds such as boreal chickadee, red-breasted nuthatch and rose-breasted grosbeak. Warblers of the northern coniferous forest include Cape May, yellow-rumped, black-throated green, palm and black and white. Amphibians include boreal toad, Canadian toad and wood frog. The only reptile found in the Boreal Forest Natural Region is the red-sided garter snake.

Rocky Mountain

The Rocky Mountain Natural Region encompasses Alberta's portion of the Rocky Mountain chain. In response to climatic variations caused by differences in elevation, three distinct subregions have developed within the Rocky Mountains – the Montane, the Subalpine and the Alpine.

The Montane subregion is small, occurring along the river valleys at low elevations and in patches of the western foothills. The Montane is warmer and drier than the other subregions as a result of Pacific air masses, which are channelled through these east-west mountain valleys. Forests in the Montane subregion tend to be open and interspersed with grassy areas. Douglas-fir is characteristic of warm, dry slopes; limber pine occurs on sandstone ridges; and lodgepole pine grows on sites following fires. Aspen and white spruce are common in the Montane, as well.

With the increased elevation of the Subalpine subregion, the climate is cool and conditions are wetter than the Montane due to greater snowfall. Coniferous forests dominate, with lodgepole pine common at the lowest elevations and Engelmann spruce and alpine fir at middle elevations. There are widely spaced whitebark pine and alpine larch at the higher

elevations where low temperatures, high sunlight intensity and high winds make it more difficult for trees to obtain adequate moisture. As this subregion grades up to the Alpine subregion, patches of krummholz occur, which are characterized by dwarfed, bushy, wind-flagged Engelmann spruce and alpine fir.

The Alpine subregion is located above the tree line where only isolated patches of krummholz grow. Strong winds, lengthy cold winters and cool summers are typical. There are great variations from site to site in environmental conditions such as wind, snow protection and exposure to the sun. Soil development is usually poor. Alpine vegetation includes willow and dwarf birch communities, moist meadows and heaths, grasslands, and the scattered grasses, forbs and lichens found on rocky outcrops and slopes.

The Rocky Mountain Natural Region is diverse, and provides habitat for many birds and animals. Species such as Harlequin duck, blue grouse, white-tailed ptarmigan, horned lark, Clark's nutcracker, mountain chickadee, American dipper, American pipit, long-toed salamander, boreal toad, spotted frog, wandering garter snake, pika, hoary marmot, Rocky Mountain goat and bighorn sheep are found here.

Canadian Shield

The Canadian Shield Natural Region is a small portion of the Canadian Shield, which extends eastward to Labrador and north to the Arctic Ocean. Outcroppings of rock, particularly granite, are common among the abundant lakes and marshy depressions. Climatic conditions are colder and drier than in much of the adjacent Boreal Forest.

In the dry, rocky uplands north of Lake Athabasca, soil development is generally poor. South of Lake Athabasca, the bedrock is less resistant to erosion and extensive sandy soils have developed. Vegetation is a mosaic of jack pine woodlands covering the rocky hills

and sandy plains, and black spruce peatlands and sedge marshes in wet depressions. In sandy sites, the rare stemless lady's-slipper and dense carpets of reindeer lichen are found in the pine woodlands. Alaska birch stands occasionally occur in moist sheltered sites along the edges of wetlands. Extensive, active sand dunes are present south of Lake Athabasca.

Birds, amphibians, reptiles and mammals of this Natural Region are similar to those found in the northern Boreal Forest.

Using this Guide to Natural Areas

The next eight pages contain information which will help you to use this guide and to enjoy your visit to any of Alberta's Natural Areas.

Look for the following sections:

- **MAPS** – this describes useful types of maps to use when you are travelling to and exploring Natural Areas and lists where you can buy these maps.
- **SAMPLE NATURAL AREA SITE DESCRIPTION** – this shows the types of information included for each Natural Area in this guide.
- **HABITAT TYPES** – this explains what habitat types are and why they provide useful information in each site description. A key to the habitat symbols is also given.
- **SITE FACILITIES** – this explains the type of facilities which can generally be expected in Natural Areas. A key to facilities symbols is also given.
- **GUIDELINES FOR USERS** – this lists guidelines which should be followed by all who visit Natural Areas in order to ensure that the natural features of the sites will not be damaged.

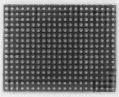
Maps

The map in each site description will help you to locate the Natural Area in relation to the nearest town or major road.

The site description maps are from the Provincial Access Series (scale 1:250,000). This series provides an excellent source of information for all forms of roads, truck trails and cutlines. They offer a good compromise between covering a large area and providing reasonable detail, and will be very useful in planning your travel route to each Natural Area.

Once you have arrived at the Natural Area, a map which shows much greater detail will be helpful. The National Topographic Series (scale 1:50,000) are the most comprehensive maps available, showing both physical landscape and man-made features.

The map sheets required for each Natural Area are listed in the site description. The legal land description, based on the Alberta Township Survey System, is also given. This indicates exactly which lands are part of the Natural Area.



Natural Area
The lands contained within the Natural Area are indicated on the map in each site description.

If you wish to obtain more information, or purchase any maps, please contact MAPS ALBERTA at one of the addresses below. MAPS ALBERTA produces an annual catalogue, available free-of-charge, which lists all maps and related products. This catalogue also contains helpful information on how to read maps and how to use the Alberta Township Survey System.

MAPS ALBERTA
Forestry, Lands and Wildlife
2nd floor, North Petroleum Plaza
9945 - 108 Street
EDMONTON, Alberta
T5K 2G6
Phone: (403) 427-3520

MAPS ALBERTA
Forestry, Lands and Wildlife
Main floor, Bantrel Building
703 - 6th Avenue S.W.
CALGARY, Alberta
T2P 0T9
Phone: (403) 297-7389

Use this example as a guide to the information included in each Natural Area Site Description

Natural Area

Natural Region

Map of the Natural Region in which the site is located.

Text describing the general location of the site, the natural features of the site and any special access or use considerations for the Natural Area.

Site Facility and Watchable Wildlife Symbols.

Administrative District where the Natural Area is located and Map Sheet to use for the site.

Location of the Natural Area shown on a Provincial Access Map (scale 1:250,000).

Natural Area is in Municipal District No. 44. Use Map Sheet 82 O/2.

Natural Area land description:
Twp 12 Rge 3 W4: SW5, N6, 7

Legal land description for the Natural Area, based on the Alberta Township Survey System.

Fc

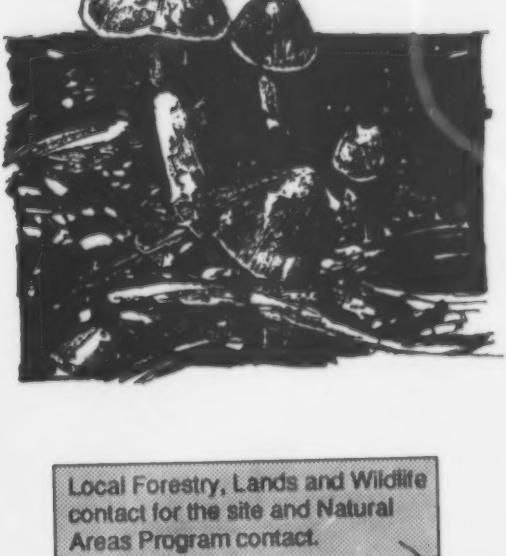
Fd

Gr

Rv

List of general habitat types to be found at the Natural Area.

Continuation of the site description text and an artist's illustration of some feature of the Natural Area.



Description of the illustration.

Fungi are important in decomposition of leaves on the forest floor.

Local Forestry, Lands and Wildlife contact for the site and Natural Areas Program contact.

Date this site description was produced.

For More Information:

Public Lands Division, Location	123-4567
Natural Areas Program, Edmonton	427-5209

12/91

Habitat Types

The type of environment in which a plant or animal normally occurs is referred to as its "habitat". For example, the red-winged blackbird's habitat consists of reed beds and cattails found in a marsh or along the edge of a waterbody. The habitat of silver saltbush is dry grassland plains and alkaline flats, while Rocky Mountain goat habitat consists of rugged mountain-sides and alpine meadows.

Each site description in this guide includes a list of the major habitat types found in that Natural Area. On the next page you'll find definitions of the habitat types. Most types are quite general. For example, the "coniferous forest" could refer to any sort of pine, spruce or fir forest on dry, sandy terrain, a moist river valley bottom, or a subalpine mountain slope.

The habitat types listed for each Natural Area provide an overview of the vegetation and landscape of that site. If you are interested in nature observation, field guides and species checklists often indicate the habitats where particular species are to be expected. The information in each site description is intended to help you predict the sorts of plants and animals you may find at that site.

Natural Areas are often "islands" of relatively undisturbed habitat among areas of settlement and agriculture.

Key to Habitat Type Symbols

Coniferous Forest

This habitat includes forests dominated by coniferous (cone-bearing) trees, including all types of spruce, pine, fir and larch.

Deciduous Forest

This habitat includes forests dominated by deciduous (non-cone-bearing, with leaves shed in the fall) trees, including all types of poplar and birch.

Mixedwood Forest

This habitat includes forests that consist of a mix of coniferous species and deciduous species (e.g., a white spruce-aspen forest).

Shrubland

This habitat is dominated by woody species such as willow, birch or saskatoon, and occasionally young deciduous trees. Shrubs often grow from multiple stems at their bases and are usually less than 2 m tall.

Grassland/Meadow

This habitat is dominated by grasses, dryland sedges and forbs. Woody plants may be present, but scattered throughout the grassland.

Peatland

This habitat includes wet areas where peat mosses or brown mosses dominate the ground cover. Black spruce, tamarack, willow and birch are common woody plants.

Wetland

This habitat includes areas dominated by water-loving grasses, sedges, rushes and forbs.

Flowing Water – River, Stream or Creek

This habitat includes channels of all sizes containing flowing water, within or adjacent to the Natural Area.

Standing Water – Lake, Pond or Slough

This habitat includes bodies of standing water of all sizes, within or adjacent to the Natural Area.

Barren Rockland or Exposed Bedrock

This habitat includes areas of largely barren rock such as mountain scree slopes and areas of exposed bedrock found in sites with badlands topography.

Site Facilities

Natural Areas are intended for low levels of public use and activities that do not require special facilities. Such uses include hiking, cross-country skiing, plant study, bird-watching, picnicking, nature observation and appreciation, photography and environmental education activities.

In some cases, societies have formed to become volunteer stewards of a Natural Area and have undertaken projects to provide site facilities. Interpretive trails, picnic shelters, pit toilets and parking lots have been established at some sites through the work of these societies.

Natural Area users are encouraged to maintain the sites. There is no garbage collection or staff available to monitor vandalism and minimize the impact of potentially destructive activities such as off-highway vehicle operation. If vandalism or problems with a site facility are observed, please notify the site contact for the Natural Area.

Cross-country skiing is a popular winter activity in Alberta's Natural Areas.

Key to Facilities Symbols

Brochures/Checklists

Descriptive brochures or species checklists are available for the site. To obtain a copy, contact the information sources.

Self-guided Trail

A self-guiding interpretive trail has been developed on this site. Trail guides are available on site or from the listed information sources.

Guided Tour

Site tours are available. Contact the information sources for details.

Observation Platform/Viewpoints

Platforms have been built for bird-watching, or viewpoints have been identified from where vistas are best appreciated.

Hiking/Walking Trail

Trails are available on site for hiking or cross-country skiing. Level of trail development varies from site to site.

Picnic/Day Use

Facilities, generally including picnic tables, cookhouse shelters and fire pits, are available for those bringing a picnic.

Tent Camping

Users have established tent-camping areas. Conditions vary from no facilities to tables, cookhouse shelters, outhouses and water available.

Toilets

Pit toilets are available, usually near the parking, trailhead or group gathering area.

Watchable Wildlife Site

These sites are identified by Alberta Fish and Wildlife as having particularly good opportunities for wildlife viewing. For more information contact your nearest Fish and Wildlife office or the Watchable Wildlife Program Coordinator in Edmonton at 427-4192. You may also wish to obtain a copy of the book *Alberta Wildlife Viewing Guide*, published in 1990 by Lone Pine Publishing, Edmonton.

Guidelines for Users

It is important to ensure that your visit to a Natural Area does not harm any of the natural features of the site. To ensure that all future visitors will be able to enjoy the beauty of an undisturbed landscape, please use the site with care and follow these guidelines:

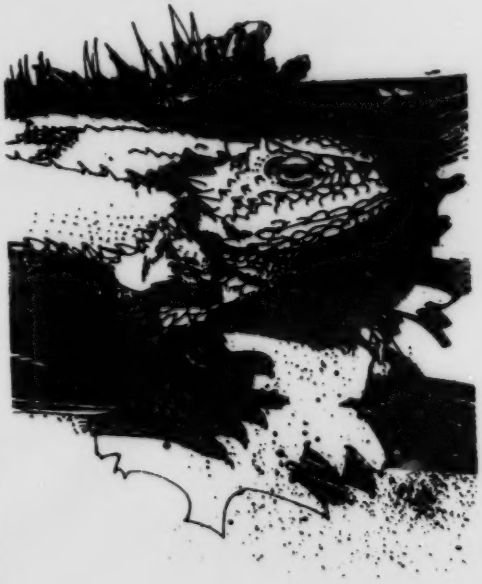
- stay on the trails – some vegetation and soils are easily damaged by footsteps, horse hooves or off-highway vehicles;
- leave nothing behind – carry out your own garbage;
- don't pick or dig up plants;
- don't feed the animals – your food can be dangerous to them and some animals can be dangerous to you;
- respect the needs of all animals for security – if they are disturbed or uneasy, always back away;
- observe site boundaries to prevent trespassing on adjoining property;
- respect all signed and restricted areas to avoid disturbing sensitive areas.

If you require additional information on any Natural Area, please use the contact phone numbers given at the end of each site description. The local Forestry, Lands and Wildlife field office staff can assist with specific site concerns. The Natural Areas Program staff can assist with more general concerns including inquiries regarding the Volunteer Steward Program.

Guide to Selected Natural Areas

Grassland Region

Red Rock Coulee.... 26



Eastern short-horned lizards live in dry grasslands in the southeast portion of the Natural Region.

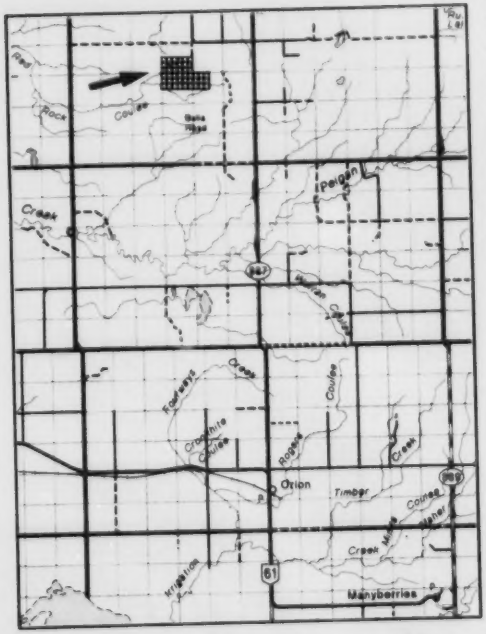
Grassland

Red Rock Coulee

Red Rock Coulee Natural Area is located 56 km southwest of Medicine Hat.

Many features make Red Rock Coulee a special site to visit. Bedrock is close to the surface in this area, covered by only a thin layer of soil. Water erosion has carved the landscape over time and a badlands topography has formed in places. The bands of colours visible in the exposed bedrock are made of dark gray shales, greenish and gray sandstones, bentonitic clays and thin bands of ironstone.

The most striking features of this landscape are the round reddish boulders. These are sandstone concretions and at up to 2.5 m in diameter, they are among the largest in the world. The boulders were formed in prehistoric seas as layers of sand, calcite and iron oxide collected around a nucleus formed by shells, leaves or bones. The concretions grew larger as the circulating waters deposited more layers. The reddish colour comes from iron oxide.



Red Rock Coulee is in the County of Forty Mile No. 8. Use Map Sheet 72 E/10.

Red Rock Coulee land description:
Twp 8 Rge 7 W4: NW14, N15, S22

Gr

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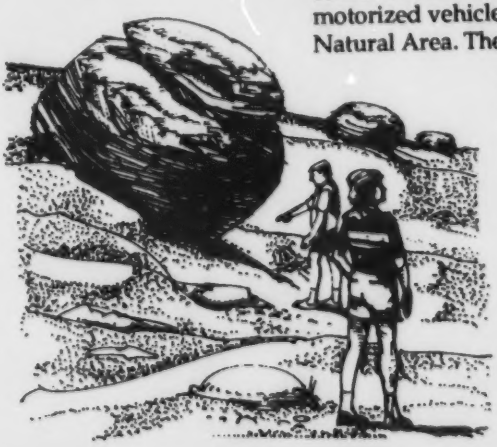
Ro

Look carefully at the concretions – you may be able to see their "growth rings" (layers of sediment deposition) and fossilized shells, leaves or bones.

On the uplands above the coulees, grasslands contain colourful wildflowers such as prairie crocus and yellow umbrella plant and provide habitat for Richardson's ground squirrel. Sagebrush, juniper and cactus grow on the coulee walls. Some of the species which have adapted well to the harsh, dry conditions of Red Rock Coulee include the white-tailed jack rabbit, mule deer, pronghorn, prairie rattlesnake, bullsnake, eastern short-horned lizard and scorpion. Prairie falcon, western meadowlark, Sprague's pipit, longspurs and rock wren are among the birds sighted.

A visit to Red Rock Coulee Natural Area is a great opportunity to observe unusual geological features and prairie plants and animals. There are picnic tables and pit toilets available. You are in rattlesnake country here, so proceed with caution while hiking. Wet weather may make walking conditions very slippery on the clay surface of the coulees. Please do not drive motorized vehicles into the Natural Area. The vegetation and soils can be damaged very easily.



Hikers examine sandstone concretions while exploring Red Rock Coulee.

For More Information:

Public Lands Division, Medicine Hat	529-3677
Natural Areas Program, Edmonton	427-5209

12/91

Parkland Region

Beaverhill.....30
Bilby.....32
Butcher Creek.....34
Fourth Creek.....36
Innisfail.....38
J.J. Collett.....40
Kleskun Hill.....42
North Cooking Lake.... 44
Outpost Wetlands.....46
Paintearth Coulee..... 48
Parkland.... 50
Riverlot 56 52
Saskatoon Mountain.... 54
Sherwood Park..... 56
Sylvan Lake.....58
Wagner.... 60

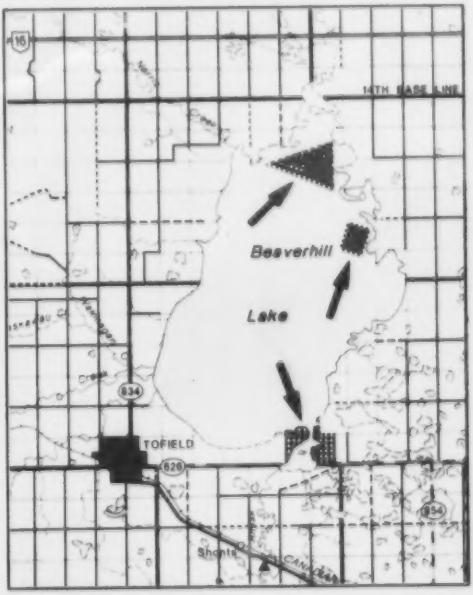
Aspen forest interspersed with grassland is characteristic of the Parkland Natural Region.

Parkland

Beaverhill

Beaverhill Natural Area is about 10 km east of Tofield, and provides an excellent opportunity to view many hundreds of migrating waterfowl and shorebirds, as well as songbirds and hawks, each spring and autumn. The best access to Beaverhill Lake is from the south at Francis Point or from the east at Mundare Beach.

This Natural Area is fairly small in size, comprising part of the shore of Beaverhill Lake and the Dekker and Pelican Islands. It helps to protect one of Alberta's most renowned resting areas for migratory birds. The extensive shoreline and variety of marshes, fields and aspen woods adjoining the large lake provide a wide diversity of habitats.



Beaverhill is in the County of Beaver No. 9 & the County of Lamont No. 30.
Use Map Sheets 83 H/7, H/8, H/9 & H/10.

Beaverhill land description:
Twp 52 Rge 17 W4: 8 (Pelican Islands), N19, S30 (Dekker Islands); *Twp 52 Rge 18 W4*: N24 (Dekker Islands); *Twp 51 Rge 17 W4*: W6; *Twp 51 Rge 18 W4*: 1, S12

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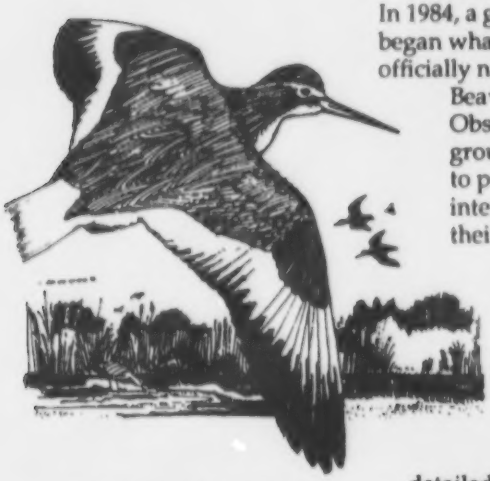


Willet is one of the shorebird species which breed at Beaverhill Lake.

Beaverhill Lake has attracted bird enthusiasts to its shores for many years. In 1984, a group of birders began what is now officially named the Beaverhill Bird Observatory. This group is dedicated to promoting public interest in birds, and their activities include banding birds, counting birds, setting up nest boxes for a variety of species, undertaking detailed research on bird behaviour and habitat needs and acting as Volunteer Steward.

The Beaverhill Natural Area benefits from the interest of a number of parties. Cooperation among local land owners, the Beaverhill Bird Observatory, Ducks Unlimited and Alberta Forestry, Lands and Wildlife has served to protect this site as an internationally renowned location for bird-watching.

If you visit Beaverhill, please ensure that your activities do not disturb the wildlife or damage any of the natural features of the site.

For More Information:

Public Lands Division, Sherwood Park 464-7955
Natural Areas Program, Edmonton 427-5209
Beaverhill Bird Observatory, Box 4943 Edmonton T6E 5G8

12/91

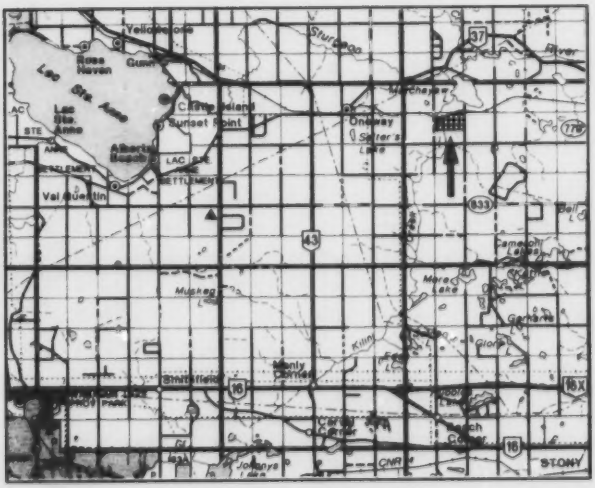
Parkland

Bilby

Bilby Natural Area is located 3.2 km east of Onoway. The site has a number of rough trails and is a good place to explore in search of plants or animals, or to simply enjoy a relaxing break.

Upland aspen-balsam poplar forest with rose and beaked hazelnut shrubs covers most of the site. The small depressional areas in this rolling landscape contain willow wetland and black spruce peatland. Grassy meadows and the occasional stand of mature white spruce are present as well. These habitats are further enhanced by Kilini Creek in the western portion of the Natural Area.

Bird species to be expected in the aspen forest include northern oriole, rose-breasted grosbeak, least flycatcher, red-tailed hawk and ruffed grouse. In the black spruce peatland you may see boreal chickadee, dark-eyed junco, hermit thrush and red-breasted nuthatch. Savanna and clay-colored sparrow can be found in the grassland.



Bilby is in the County of Lac Ste. Anne No. 28. Use Map Sheet 83 G/9.

Bilby land description:
Twp 54 Rge 1 W5: NE29, NW29 (S/railway)

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Beaver use aspen and balsam poplar trees for food, dam building and lodge construction.

Beaver are active along the creek; the ponds that form behind their dams enhance the area for waterbirds including blue-winged teal, great blue heron and spotted sandpiper. Standing dead trees along the creek, perhaps drowned by a beaver pond, provide nesting sites for woodpeckers or tree-nesting ducks such as bufflehead and common goldeneye, as well as perches for hawks and owls.

Bilby Natural Area is a fine place to bird-watch and observe nature in all seasons. Please ensure that your activities do not harm any of the natural features of the site.

For More Information:

Public Lands Division, Barrhead	674-8231
Natural Areas Program, Edmonton	427-5209

12/91

Parkland

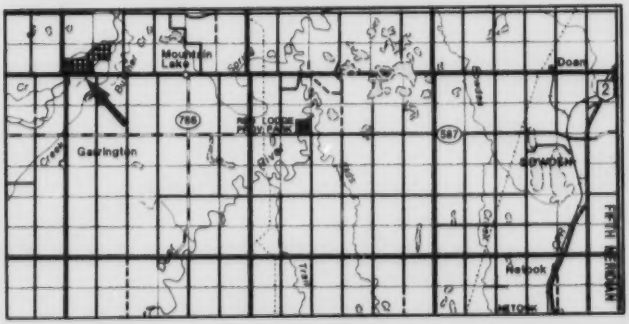
Butcher Creek

Accessible by road or in a canoe on the Red Deer River, the Butcher Creek Natural Area is located 3 km downstream of the Garrington Bridge and 25 km west of Bowden.

If you are interested in riverine habitat, this is a perfect site to visit. The site is located on the old floodplain of the Red Deer River and the river flats, active and abandoned channels and islands are evidence of the meandering course of the river over time. Some old channels have been dammed by beaver, while others exist as shallow, moist depressions which are frequently filled by dense alder and willow shrubland.

Mature, moss-covered white spruce forest is present on moist sites, while aspen and balsam poplar forest occurs on the drier areas. Occasional flooding replenishes nutrients in the soil and allows vigorous growth of plants growing near the river channels. Rocky, thin-soiled sites support dry, open meadows.

Butcher Creek is in the County of Red Deer No. 23.
Use Map Sheet 82 O/16.



Butcher Creek land description:
Twp 35 Rge 3 W5: NW5, NE6 (Islands & S/river), S6

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The vegetation in this area provides habitat for a variety of wildlife species. Moose and deer browse the willows and seek shelter as they travel along the Red Deer River corridor. Ducks use the beaver ponds, while the varied forest cover and shoreline attracts many different songbirds, as well as providing homes for small mammals such as the snowshoe hare and red squirrel.

Butcher Creek Natural Area provides opportunities for plant, mammal or bird-watchers to enjoy a riverine environment. There are no facilities, but you'll find numerous hiking trails. Private lands border the Natural Area, so please observe signs indicating boundaries and do not trespass on adjoining property.

White-tailed deer are most active at dusk and dawn, feeding on buds and twigs of shrubs or saplings, grass and fruit.

For More Information:

Public Lands Division, Red Deer	340-5451
Natural Areas Program, Edmonton	427-5209

12/91

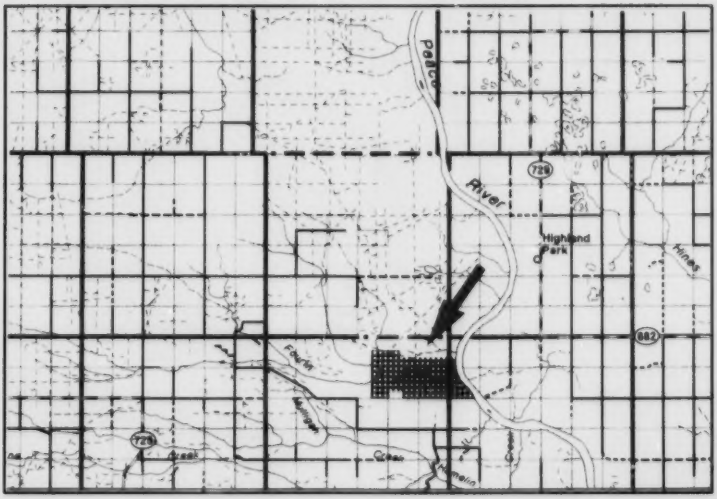
Parkland

Fourth Creek

The Fourth Creek Natural Area, located approximately 35 km west of Fairview, is a highly scenic location with vistas of both the Fourth Creek and Peace River valleys. In addition, a bowl-shaped waterfall with a 6-m drop is located on Fourth Creek, about 1.5 km upstream from the Peace River. If you are canoeing you may wish to land near Fourth Creek's convergence with the Peace River and do some exploring in the Natural Area. Otherwise access to the site is from the west.

The Fourth Creek valley is steep-sided and the north- and south-facing slopes support distinctly different vegetation. The south-facing slopes receive lots of sun, and are covered largely by wheat grass grassland. On the north-facing side of the valley, where it is shaded and cool, aspen-white spruce mixedwood forest grows.

Fourth Creek is in Improvement District No. 20.
Use Map Sheets 84 D/2 & D/3.



Fourth Creek land description:
Twp 81 Rge 6 W6: NW & SE30 (W/river), SW30, LSDs 3 & 4 of 31 (W/river); *Twp 81 Rge 7 W6*: 25, N & SE26, LSDs 5 & 6 of 26, E27, SE34, LSDs 1, 2, 3, 4 & 5 of 35, LSDs 1, 2, 3 & 4 of 36

Fd

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Young aspen forest and saskatoon and rose shrubland are common on the flat uplands above the valley breaks and also in the smaller drainage channels feeding into the creek.

Fourth Creek is slow moving with numerous boulders along its channel. Along the valley walls are outcrops of sandstone bedrock, scars from past soil slumping and water seepage areas.

Fourth Creek Natural Area provides excellent wildlife habitat, particularly winter range for mule deer and moose. The south-facing grassy slopes provide an important feed source for the animals wintering in the area, and the adjacent forests provide shelter. The grassland of the valley slopes and the aspen-dominated forest nearby are reminiscent of Parkland Natural Region landscapes found much farther south in Alberta.

Enjoy your visit to Fourth Creek Natural Area, but please ensure that your activities do not damage the natural features of the site.

Grassland covers steep slopes in the Fourth Creek valley.

For More Information:

Alberta Forest Service, Grande Prairie	538-8080
Natural Areas Program, Edmonton	427-5209

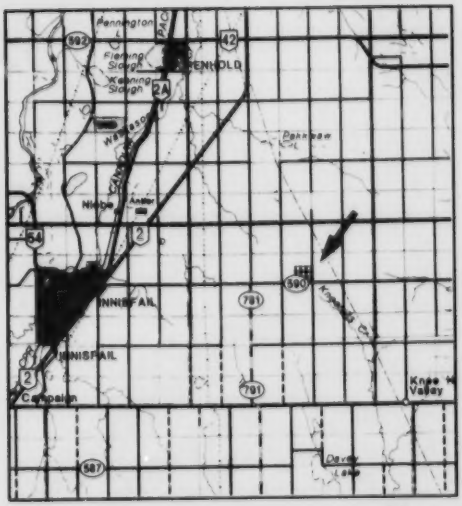
12/91

Parkland

Innisfail

Located approximately 10 km east of Innisfail, this is one of the few land parcels in the Innisfail-Red Deer area that remain in a relatively natural state. Intensive agricultural activity in the Parkland Natural Region has removed or changed much of the natural vegetation.

Innisfail Natural Area was once part of a homestead. The areas that were once cultivated fields are now in various stages of regrowing to aspen woods. Over half of the Natural Area was never cultivated. Aspen and balsam poplar forest covers much of this part of the Natural Area, and provides an example of what the central portion of Alberta once looked like. Wet willow shrubland and sedge meadows ringed with willow cover a small part of the site. Beaver have dammed the intermittent stream at the uppermost end of Kneehills Creek, creating a small pond.



Innisfail is located in the County of Red Deer No. 23.
Use Map Sheet 83 A/4.

Innisfail land description:
Twp 35 Rge 27 W4: SE27

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Star-flowered Solomon's-seal, a common plant of the aspen forest, flowers in June and July.

This site provides habitat for a variety of mammals and birds, including deer, coyote, beaver, muskrat, songbirds, hawks and grouse. This important "island" among agricultural lands offers wildlife shelter from weather, food sources not available in cultivated fields and, for those species which do not need a large territory, a place to live and breed.

Innisfail Natural Area is easily accessible by vehicle. A short trail leads into the site from the road and wildlife trails go across the open areas and through the woodlands. Enjoy your visit to this remnant of the aspen parkland, and please ensure that your activities do not damage any of the natural features of the site.

For More Information:

Public Lands Division, Red Deer	340-5451
Natural Areas Program, Edmonton	427-5209

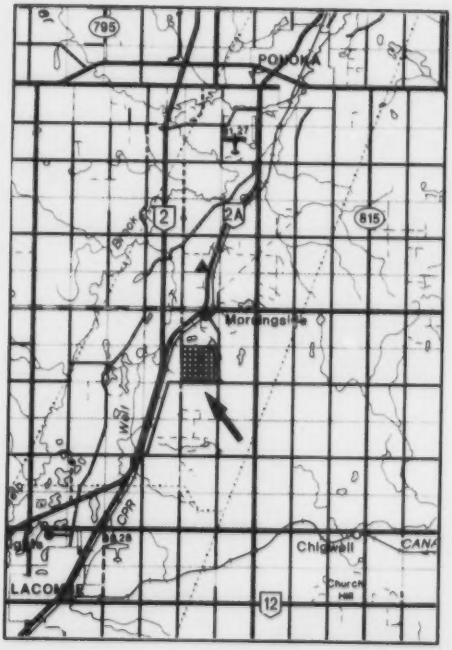
12/91

Parkland

J.J. Collett

The J.J. Collett Natural Area is 11 km north of Lacombe and 11 km south of Ponoka. In an area where much of the landscape has been modified by settlement and agriculture, this Natural Area is valued for its flora and wildlife.

Black spruce peatland and willow-sedge wetland feeds a small creek which meanders across the site. Aspen and balsam poplar forest, willow shrubland and meadows form a vegetation mosaic across most of the rolling landscape. On cool, moist hillsides, stands of white spruce grow. A portion of the Natural Area is located on old, stabilized sand dunes, which are covered by grassland on south-facing slopes and white spruce forest on north-facing slopes.



J.J. Collett is in the County of Lacombe No. 14. Use Map Sheet 83 A/12.

J.J. Collett land description:
Twp 41 Rge 26 W4: 26 (except pt. LSD 1)

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Mammals which may be seen include white-tailed deer, coyote, porcupine, snowshoe hare, pocket gopher and woodchuck. Boreal chorus frog, wood frog and Canadian toad are found in the wetlands. Bird species of the aspen forest include yellow-bellied sapsucker, yellow warbler, song sparrow, northern flicker, great horned owl and ruffed grouse. In the willow and sedge wetlands chipping, Lincoln's and clay-colored sparrow and marsh hawk are found, and in the white spruce stands you can expect hermit thrush, dark-eyed junco and ovenbird.

The individual parts of this mix of habitats are all quite typical of the Parkland Natural Region, but because less and less of the aspen parkland remains in its natural state, the J.J. Collett Natural Area is a special place. This site is used for environmental education, orienteering and Boy Scout training.

Anyone who enjoys nature observation of any sort will enjoy hiking trails in the J.J. Collett Natural Area. Please ensure that your activities do not harm any of the natural features of this site.

Prairie crocus grows in the grasslands of J.J. Collett Natural Area and is one of the first flowers of spring, blooming in April and May.

For More Information:

J.J. Collett Foundation, Lacombe	782-6138
Public Lands Division, Ponoka	783-7090
Natural Areas Program, Edmonton	427-5209

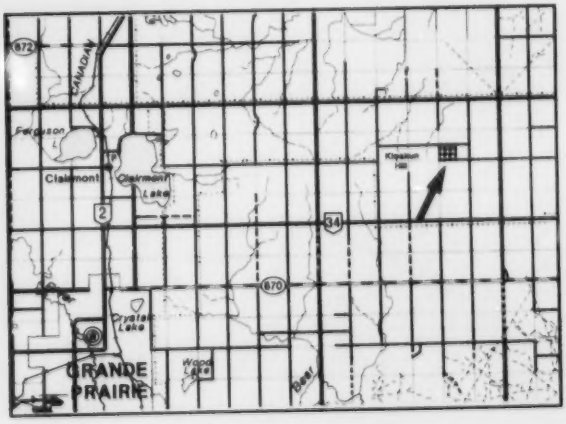
12/91

Parkland

Kleskun Hill

Kleskun Hill rises 100 m above the plains surrounding the city of Grande Prairie. It is one of the most extensive areas of native upland vegetation remaining in the Peace River portion of the Parkland Natural Region. Within this landscape is the Kleskun Hill Natural Area, located approximately 26 km northeast of Grande Prairie.

The original grasslands of this area have been extensively developed for agriculture, as have those in the Parkland Natural Region of central Alberta. Few examples remain today of this northern prairie. Kleskun Hill Natural Area is covered mainly by dry grassland which contains plant species that are rare or at the northernmost limit of their distribution, such as the prickly pear cactus. Aspen groves are contained within the Natural Area as well.



Kleskun Hill is in the County of Grande Prairie No. 1. Use Map Sheets 83 M/7 & M/8.

Kleskun Hill land description:
Twp 72 Rge 4 W6: SW26

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Badlands, common in southern Alberta along the Red Deer River, are present in the Natural Area. This is the most northerly occurrence known of such "skeletonized hills" made from soft bedrock that has been eroded over time to expose layers of clays, sands, narrow seams of coal and some fossil-bearing layers.

Kleskun Hill Natural Area is an interesting and beautiful site to visit. Scenic vistas are available from the hilltops, and the badlands and grassland invite exploration by anyone interested in geological formations or Alberta's native plants.

Motorized vehicle use is not permitted within the Natural Area in order to prevent soil erosion and destruction of the vegetation. A picnic site is located in the south end of the area. If you visit this site, please keep the area clean and ensure that your activities do not harm the natural features.

Prickly pear cactus reaches the northernmost limit of its distribution in the Kleskun Hill area.

For More Information:

Public Lands Division, Grande Prairie 538-5260
Natural Areas Program, Edmonton 427-5209

12/91

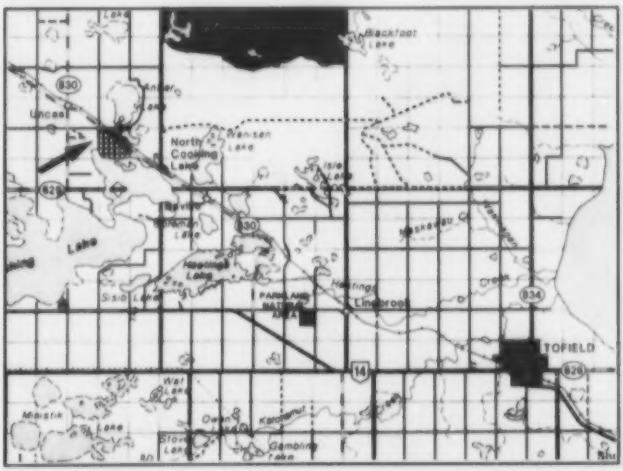
Parkland

North Cooking Lake

North Cooking Lake Natural Area is located 20 km east of Sherwood Park, and is an important piece of protected habitat in an area increasingly affected by acreage developments.

This is an area of rolling "knob and kettle" topography with steep-sided hills (knobs) and numerous wetlands in the depressions (kettles), formed during the retreat of glaciers of the last Ice Age. Large masses of ice broke away from the ice sheet to be covered by debris which acted as insulation. As the ice melted, it left large depressions and a new landscape.

The rough topography of the Natural Area provides important wildlife habitat. Ponds are ringed by cattail and willow. Red-winged blackbird nest in the cattail, songbirds nest and feed in the willow, and many types of waterfowl, including blue-winged teal and northern shoveler, use the ponds. The depressions contain willow shrubland, sedge wetland and black spruce peatland.



North Cooking Lake is in the County of Strathcona No. 20. Use Map Sheet 83 H/7.

North Cooking Lake land description:
Twp 52 Rge 21 W4: 11 (except lake and road)

Red-winged blackbird are common in cattail at the edges of wetlands in the Natural Area.

Approximately 1.5 km of the shoreline of North Cooking Lake is included in the southern part of the Natural Area. Extensive meadows (originally pastures) and wetlands are located near the lake.

On upland areas in the Natural Area aspen forests are common with occasional stands of paper birch. Deer, moose, snowshoe hare and weasel are some of the mammals that can be seen.

North Cooking Lake Natural Area is easily accessible by vehicle from Wye Road and there is a system of rough trails throughout the site. Hiking, cross-country skiing and nature observation can be enjoyed there year round. If you visit North Cooking Lake Natural Area, please keep the site clean and take care not to damage any of the natural features which you find there.

Fd **Fm** **Sh** **Gr** **Pt** **We** **Rv** **Lk**

For More Information:

Public Lands Division, Sherwood Park 464-7955
Natural Areas Program, Edmonton 427-5209

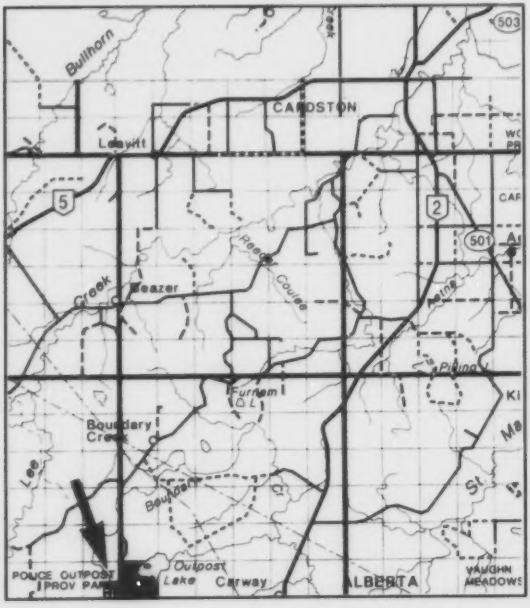
12/91

Parkland

Outpost Wetlands

The Outpost Wetlands Natural Area is located southwest of Cardston on the Montana, U.S.A. border adjacent to Police Outpost Provincial Park.

The Natural Area is divided by a glacier meltwater channel, cut at the end of the last Ice Age, through which Boundary Creek now flows. In the northeast portion of the site, grassland grows on south-facing slopes. Bedrock outcrops are present, along with patches of creeping juniper and wild flowers. Part of the lower slope of Chief Mountain is in the southwest, where aspen forest is interspersed with open meadows and several ravines.

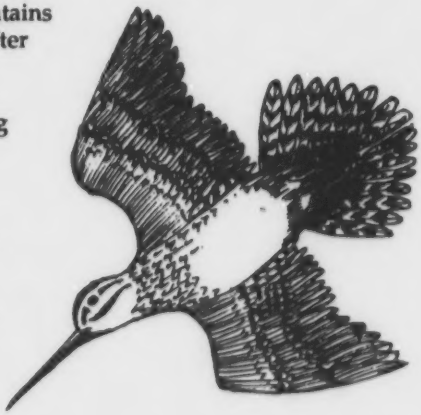


Outpost Wetlands is in Municipal District No. 6.
Use Map Sheet 82 H/3.

Outpost Wetlands land description:
Twp 1 Rge 27 W4: SE1

Fd Sh Gr We Rv Lk

The central portion of the Natural Area contains the large wetlands after which the site was named. There are a number of interesting plant species here, including blue camas, water hemlock, wild mint, shooting star and elephant head. During dry periods you can see several channels of Boundary Creek which flow through this part of the Natural Area.



Common snipe is frequently seen at Outpost Wetlands.

Wildlife is varied and abundant. Among the bird species are mountain bluebird, cedar waxwing, tree swallow, common yellowthroat, black-headed grosbeak, eastern kingbird, American goldfinch, red-tailed hawk, northern goshawk and sandhill crane. Mammals known to use the Natural Area include white-tailed deer, moose, black bear and several types of ground squirrel, the most common being the Columbian ground squirrel.

A system of rough trails in the Natural Area is available for hikers and cross-country ski enthusiasts. The variety of habitats present will interest plant and bird-watchers who wish to explore this southwestern remnant of the Parkland Natural Region. While visiting Outpost Wetlands Natural Area please ensure that your activities do not damage the natural features of the site.

For More Information:

Public Lands Division, Lethbridge	381-5473
Natural Areas Program, Edmonton	427-5209

12/91

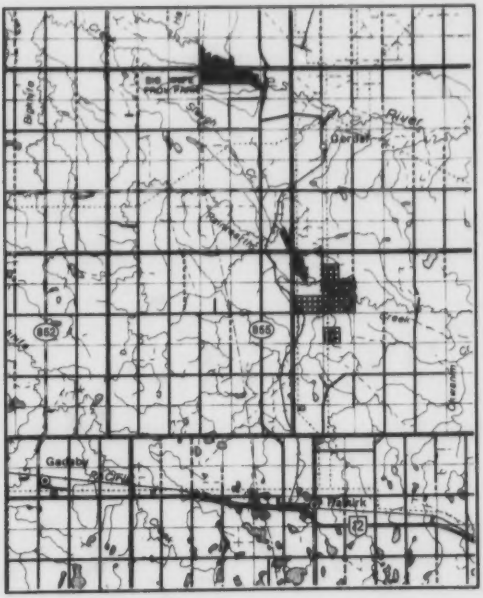
Parkland

Paintearth Coulee

Paintearth Coulee Natural Area is located approximately 13.6 km south and east from the Battle River crossing at Big Knife Provincial Park, east of Stettler.

The most interesting aspect of this site is the badlands topography of the coulee. Hoodoos and flat-topped, free-standing plateaus are common, and in this erosional landscape sedimentary layers are exposed. You will find coal seams and layers of the reddish fire shales, which give the coulee its name. Paintearth Creek flows across the bottom of the broad valley.

The vegetation is an interesting mosaic. The south-facing slopes of the valley and the buttes, together with the butte tops, support a dry, mixed grassland. On the north-facing slopes are aspen



Paintearth Coulee is in the County of Paintearth No. 18. Use Map Sheet 83 A/8.

Paintearth Coulee land description:
Twp 39 Rge 15 W4: SW20, 29, S30, SW32

Hoodoos are an interesting part of the landscape of Paintearth Coulee Natural Area.

forest and areas of aspen-saskatoon shrubland. Because the north-facing side of the valley is shaded, it supports large stands of white spruce. The valley floor along the creek contains a dense growth of willow, choke cherry and hawthorn with widely spaced Manitoba maple trees.

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The creek provides a water source and a variety of habitats for wildlife in this dry area. The mosaic of grassland, shrubland, forest and the creek channel vegetation attract a variety of bird species. Mammals spotted on the site include coyote, deer, beaver, pocket gopher and white-tailed jack rabbit.

Paintearth Coulee Natural Area is easily accessible by vehicle. There are hiking trails present throughout the area for those wishing to explore. The dry soils and steep hills are prone to erosion and the vegetation is easily damaged. Please drive motorized vehicles only on the roads and ensure that your activities do not damage the natural features of the site.

For More Information:

Public Lands Division, Red Deer	340-5451
Natural Areas Program, Edmonton	427-5209

12/91

Parkland

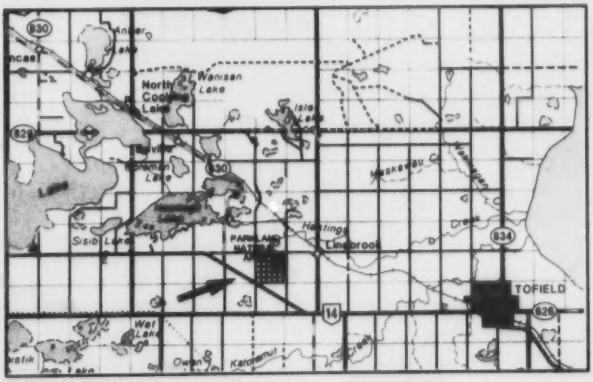
Parkland

Parkland Natural Area is easily accessible by vehicle, located 8 km northwest of Tofield and 48 km east of Edmonton (south of Township Road 512, between Range Roads 202 and 201). This area has been greatly modified by agricultural activities and residential subdivisions.

This site provides a glimpse of how the area looked before settlement and agricultural development. The Natural Area has a rough "knob and kettle" topography, made up of small rounded hills (knobs), interspersed with many small ponds and wetlands in depressions (kettles).

Aspen forest is the dominant vegetation. There are scattered stands of balsam poplar and paper birch throughout, and the rare shield fern has been found, as well. South-facing slopes are covered by shrubby grassland. Numerous ponds and wetlands support a variety of willow shrubland, sedge wetland and water's-edge vegetation such as cattail and bulrush.

Parkland is in the County of Strathcona No. 20 &
the County of Beaver No. 9.
Use Map Sheet 83 H/7.



Parkland land description:
Twp 51 Rge 20 W4: 11

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Numerous species of birds and mammals live in or rely upon the aspen forest. Deer, coyote, snowshoe hare, red squirrel and porcupine can be seen along with northern saw-whet owl, great horned owl, red-tailed hawk and ruffed grouse. The ponds are home to boreal chorus frog, wood frog, tiger salamander and beaver and provide nesting territory for waterfowl and other birds such as spotted sandpiper. Because Parkland Natural Area is surrounded by lands that are being cleared, it provides a refuge for wildlife and is an excellent place to search for either animals or plants.

Trails for hiking or cross-country skiing wind through the Natural Area. Please ensure that your activities do not damage any of the natural features of this valuable site.

Parkland Natural Area contains aspen forest which is characteristic of the Parkland Natural Region.

For More Information:

Public Lands Division, Sherwood Park 464-7955
Natural Areas Program, Edmonton 427-5209

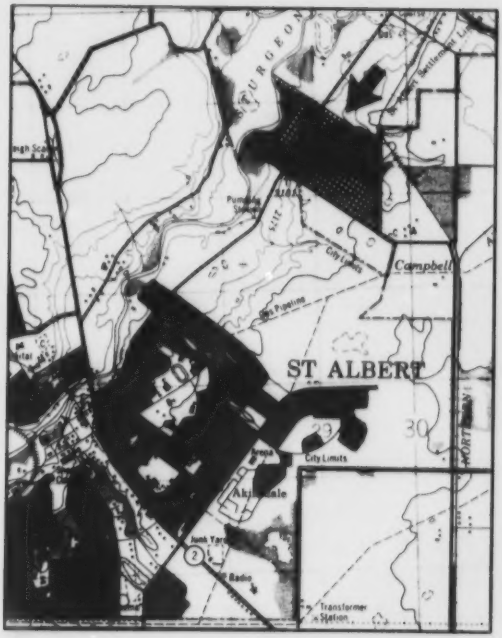
12/91

Parkland

Riverlot 56

Riverlot 56 Natural Area is located just outside the city of St. Albert, along the banks of the Sturgeon River. It was one of the original parcels of land surveyed in the early 1900s during the settlement of the St. Albert area.

In an area of urban and acreage development, this site is a valuable island of natural habitat. Local groups have long recognized its importance. In 1980 the Riverlot 56 Natural Area Society was formed to preserve the ecological diversity and natural features of the area while encouraging environmental education and outdoor recreation activities such as hiking.



Riverlot 56 is in the Municipal District of Sturgeon No. 90
Use Map Sheet 83 H/12.

Riverlot 56 land description:
Twp 54 Rge 25 W4: pt. NE10, pt. NW10, pt. SW14, pt. SE15
(Plan 465 Riverlot 56)

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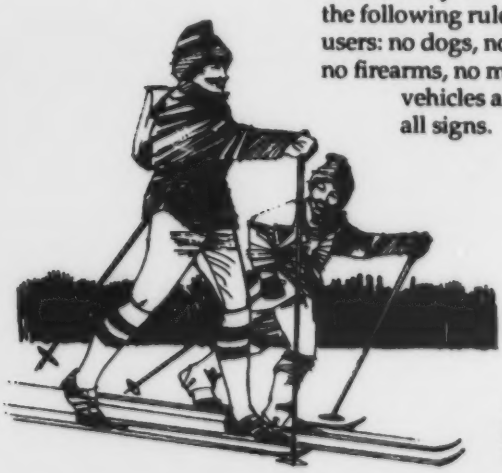
There are a number of habitat types. Aspen forest covers much of the gently rolling upland. Old hay fields are being overgrown by native plants. Landforms along the floodplain of the Sturgeon River include terraces and meander scars. Willow shrubland and a variety of wetlands are present along the river. Bird species such as cedar waxwing, alder and least flycatcher, common yellowthroat and Brewer's blackbird can be seen, as well as muskrat, beaver and deer.

Riverlot 56 Natural Area is easily accessible by vehicle year-round. A system of trails can be used for hiking, cross-country skiing and nature observation. If you visit this popular site, please help to maintain its beauty. The Riverlot 56 Natural Area Society has developed the following rules for users: no dogs, no littering, no firearms, no motorized vehicles and respect all signs.



Cross-country skiing is a favorite winter activity at the Natural Area.

For More Information:

City of St. Albert, Community Services	459-1600
Public Lands Division, Sherwood Park	464-7955
Natural Areas Program, Edmonton	427-5209

12/91

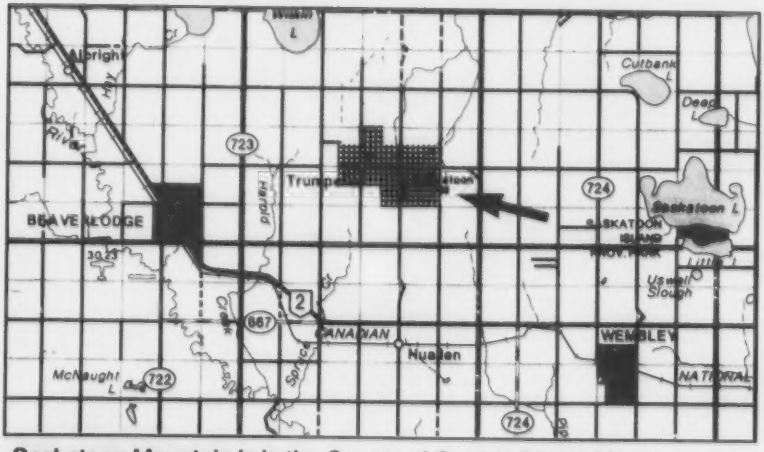
Parkland

Saskatoon Mountain

Saskatoon Mountain Natural Area is located about 32 km west of Grande Prairie and about 8 km east of Beaverlodge. Saskatoon Mountain is a large hill rising about 150 m above the surrounding countryside. It provides heavily treed habitat in an area that has largely been cleared for agricultural use.

There is a variety of forest and shrubland in the Natural Area. Aspen forest dominates the steep south and west slopes of the hill. Balsam poplar stands grow in the moist sites along small creek drainages. A few stands of mature white spruce are present on the hilltop plateau. Paper birch stands intermingle with alder-willow shrubland in wetter sites on the plateau, and along drainages on the north slope. Sedge wetland is found in some depressions.

In Saskatoon Mountain Natural Area there are about 20 plant species more commonly found in the foothills and mountain areas of Alberta. These include mountain ash and thimbleberry shrubs, false Solomon's-seal and white angelica.



Saskatoon Mountain is in the County of Grande Prairie No. 1.
Use Map Sheet 83 M/3.

Saskatoon Mountain land description:
Twp 72 Rge 9 W6: NE9, N & SE10, 11, S14, S & NW15, SE16

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Bird species such as yellow-bellied sapsucker, alder flycatcher, house wren and common yellowthroat can be seen in the Natural Area, and mule deer, moose, coyote, snowshoe hare and Columbian ground squirrel use the site for food and shelter.

From the 1950s until 1988, Saskatoon Mountain was the site of a Canadian government radar installation. The facility has been closed and the buildings removed. Reclamation of the disturbed land within the Natural Area is underway.

The site provides an expansive view of the surrounding landscape and the Rocky Mountains to the southwest. Easily accessible by vehicle, recreationists will enjoy their visit to Saskatoon Mountain Natural Area. Summer users include hikers, picnickers, berry pickers, and plant and bird-watchers. There is a toboggan hill and system of cross-country ski trails for winter users.

If you visit this site, please ensure that your activities do not harm the natural features of the area. If you use off-highway vehicles or snowmobiles to travel within the Natural Area, use only established trails. The reclaimed areas are particularly sensitive to disturbance, so respect all signed and restricted areas.

Forests cover much of the Natural Area.

For More Information:

Public Lands Division, Grande Prairie	538-5260
Natural Areas Program, Edmonton	427-5209

12/91

Parkland

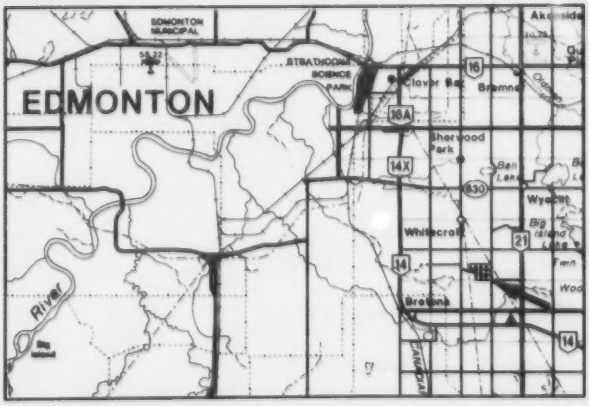
Sherwood Park

Sherwood Park Natural Area is located 4 km south of Sherwood Park (0.8 km south of Township Road 522, immediately south of Roseburn Estates subdivision). Trails at the site are accessible from the parking lot located on Range Road 231.

The rolling landscape is covered largely by mature aspen and balsam poplar forest. Patches of mature white spruce and paper birch add variety to the forest cover. There are a number of wet depressions throughout, including one larger slough in the northwest corner of the site. The wetland habitats include willow shrubland, paper birch-willow-Labrador tea shrubland and cattail-sedge wetland.

The Sherwood Park Natural Area is an oasis for wildlife. Surrounded by agricultural land and residential subdivisions, the forest and wetland provides food and shelter for numerous mammals.

Sherwood Park is in the County of Strathcona No. 20.
Use Map Sheet 83 H/6.



Sherwood Park land description:
Twp 52 Rge 23 W4: SE11, pt. SW11 (N & NE/road on Plan 3820P)

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White-tailed deer are common and moose are occasionally seen. Signs of coyote, snowshoe hare, porcupine and red squirrel are often found. The mosaic of habitats attracts a variety of bird species, a number of which reside here all year long including hairy and downy woodpeckers, great horned owl, northern saw-whet owl, black-capped chickadee and white-breasted nuthatch.

Nature lovers of all sorts will enjoy year-round hiking on the system of trails. The "Old Edmonton Trail", a wagon track used in the early 1900s by those travelling between Edmonton and Cooking Lake, passes through the Natural Area.

A visit to Sherwood Park Natural Area will provide you with a glimpse of what much of the region east of Edmonton was like before settlement. Please ensure that your activities do not damage any of the natural features of the site.

Northern saw-whet owl have frequently been sighted in the Natural Area. This small owl nests in tree cavities, eats rodents and is active only at night.

For More Information:

Strathcona County, Sherwood Park	467-2211
Public Lands Division, Sherwood Park	464-7955
Natural Areas Program, Edmonton	427-5209

12/91

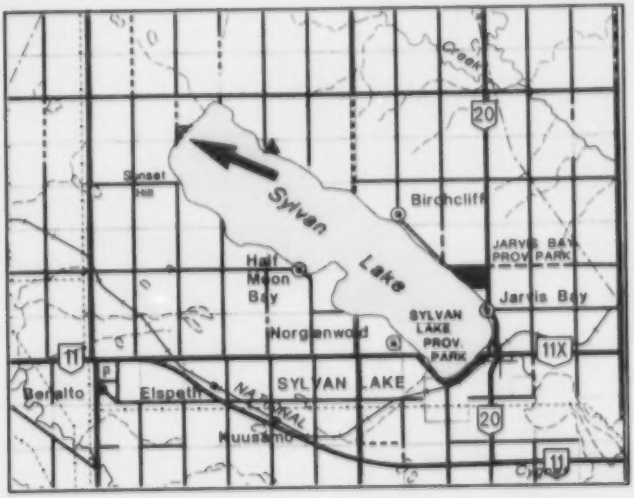
Parkland

Sylvan Lake

Sylvan Lake Natural Area is a small site located on the northwest shore of Sylvan Lake. It is the only public land on the lakeshore that is still in a natural state.

Mature balsam and aspen poplar forest occurs on the upland area adjacent to the lake. Balsam poplar and Alaska birch grow on the lower moist ground, formerly a shoreline. These moist woodlands contain a number of boreal forest species that are at the southernmost limits of their distribution. They include three woodland ferns – the lady fern, the narrow spinulose shield fern and the oak fern.

The shoreline is typical of Alberta's lakes with a number of long, narrow zones of differing habitats which parallel the shoreline, making a transition from the open water of the lake to the balsam poplar forest of the upland. There are cattail and bulrush beds along the water's edge, a willow zone, and a levee and lagoon. The levee is a natural



Sylvan Lake is in the County of Lacombe No. 14.
Use Map Sheet 83 B/8.

Sylvan Lake land description:
Twp 39 Rge 2 W5: NW28 (W/lake), LSDs 3 & 4 of 33 (W/lake)

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embankment that traps water, forming a sheltered lagoon that is vegetated by a mosaic of willow, cattail, bulrush and other marsh plants. Plant enthusiasts searching for wetland species will find many plants of interest here.

Waterbirds, songbirds, muskrat, and boreal chorus and wood frogs inhabit the shoreline zones. White-tailed deer, moose and snowshoe hare can be seen in the upland forest. There are excellent bird-watching opportunities throughout the Natural Area.

Sylvan Lake Natural Area is easily accessible by vehicle. A trail leads to the water's edge, crossing the different zones of shoreline habitat. This site provides you with a fascinating look at the diversity of flora and fauna typical of lakeshores in central Alberta. Please ensure that your activities do not harm any of the natural features of this important Natural Area.

The pileated woodpecker is a powerful chopper, making large rectangular holes in dead trees in its search for carpenter ants.

For More Information:

Public Lands Division, Ponoka	783-7090
Natural Areas Program, Edmonton	427-5209

12/91

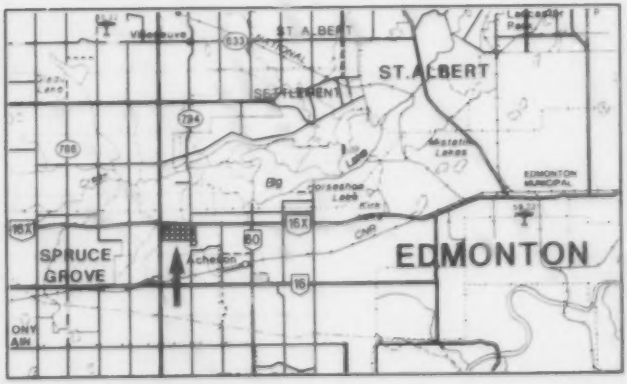
Parkland

Wagner

Wagner Natural Area is located about 7 km west of Edmonton on Highway 16X, just south of the intersection with Highway 794. An island of natural habitat amid agricultural land, residential subdivisions, urban and industrial sprawl, nature enthusiasts will find this site to be a fascinating place.

It is largely wooded, with aspen, white spruce, paper birch-willow and black spruce-feathermoss forests. Some of the area was once cleared for hay meadows, and these still provide open spaces in the forest cover.

The most fascinating features of the landscape of Wagner Natural Area are the wetlands. Calcareous groundwater springs have created calcium-rich marl ponds. Marl is an insoluble carbonate residue, and it covers the mosses and wetland plants growing in and around the pools with a whitish coating. Willow-sedge shrubland and black spruce and tamarack peatland are wetland habitats there, as well.



Wagner is in the County of Parkland No. 31. Use Map Sheet 83 H/12.

Wagner land description:
Twp 53 Rge 26 W4: N7, pt. NW8 (Lot 14, Plan 3632RS), pt. SW8 (Land Title Plan 8923651)

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A rich diversity of flora and fauna is present including 16 of the 24 species of orchids found in Alberta. Common species include the northern green orchid, yellow lady's-slipper and round-leaved orchid, while a rare species is the bog adder's-mouth. The peatland and marl pool areas are home to interesting carnivorous plants – the sundew, bladderwort and butterwort – which trap and feed on insects.

A variety of songbirds as well as boreal and northern saw-whet owls find food and shelter here. Signs of deer, snowshoe hare, red squirrel and porcupine can be found throughout. Boreal toad is an interesting and frequent inhabitant of the marl pools.

There is a self-guiding interpretive trail where you may learn about the natural history of Wagner Natural Area. If you visit the site, please keep to the trails, especially in the wetland areas, to avoid trampling sensitive vegetation. Furthermore, ensure that your activities do not damage the natural features of this special place.

Yellow lady's-slipper is a showy orchid which grows in the woods and peatlands of Wagner Natural Area.

For More Information:

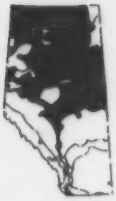
County of Parkland, Stony Plain	963-2231
Natural Areas Program, Edmonton	427-5209

12/91

Boreal Forest Region

Astotin.... 64
Bellis.... 66
Burtonsville Island.....68
Coyote Lake.... 70
Halfmoon Lake.....72
Holmes Crossing.....74
Kimiwan Lake.....76
La Saline.....78
Police Point.....80
White Earth Valley.... 82

Mixedwood forest is common in the Boreal Forest Natural Region.



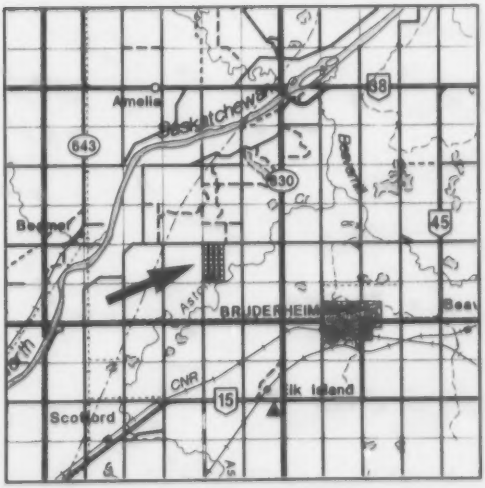
Boreal Forest

Astotin

Astotin Natural Area is located approximately 9.5 km northwest of Bruderheim.

The landscape is gently rolling and in the southeast corner a small creek is located, draining into Astotin Lake in Elk Island National Park. An extensive fire burned through here in the spring of 1988, primarily damaging patches of the forest undergrowth. This site now provides a good opportunity to view the regrowth of vegetation following this natural disturbance.

Several forest habitat types are present. White spruce-aspen and white spruce-paper birch mixedwood is common; jack pine woodland on sandy knolls and balsam poplar stands also occur. In wet depressions, willow shrubland has developed.



Astotin is in the County of Strathcona No. 20.
Use Map Sheet 83 H/14.

Astotin land description:
Twp 56 Rge 21 W4: W11

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Wildlife is abundant including moose, deer, fox, coyote, porcupine, snowshoe hare and red squirrel. Larger mammals have established a network of game trails throughout the Natural Area. A variety of bird species use the numerous habitats, including boreal and black-capped chickadees, blue jay, black-billed magpie, hairy woodpecker and northern flicker.

Recreational opportunities exist at Astotin Natural Area for those who like to observe plants or birds, hike or cross-country ski. If you visit the site, please ensure that your activities do not damage any of the natural features of the area. Lands adjacent to the Natural Area are privately owned, so please stay within the site boundaries during your visit.

Porcupine spend most of the daylight hours resting. They feed at night on leaves, inner bark and small twigs.

For More Information:

Public Lands Division, Sherwood Park 464-7955
Natural Areas Program, Edmonton 427-5209

12/91

Boreal Forest

Bellis

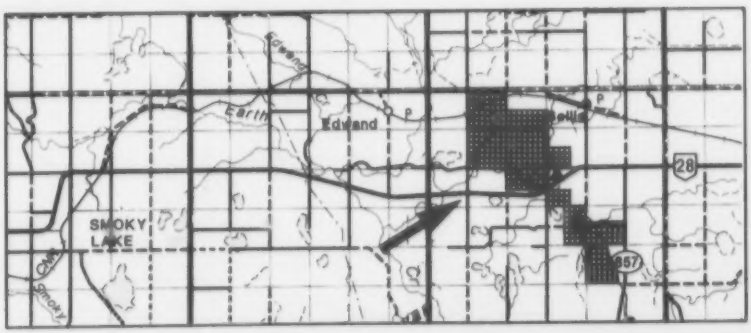
Bellis Natural Area is located 1.6 km west of Bellis and 14.4 km east of Smoky Lake in an area of stabilized sand dunes.

The landscape is rolling, with dry, open forests of jack pine and aspen and some grassland on the uplands. Poorly drained wetlands or small ponds occur in the areas between the dune ridges. Wetlands include willow shrubland and black spruce-peat moss or tamarack-dwarf birch peatland. In some moist sites where there is better drainage, lush aspen and balsam poplar forest with dense shrub and herb cover grows.

The different forests and shrublands are home to many songbirds and the ponds support a variety of waterfowl and birds such as great blue heron. Black bear, deer, moose, coyote, beaver and red squirrel are seen in the Natural Area.

This scenic location is enhanced by Bellis Lake. This lake is stocked with fish, and is enjoyed by campers, fishermen and swimmers who use the "Smoky Lake" campsite located there.

Bellis is in the County of Smoky Lake No. 13.
Use Map Sheet 83 I/1.



Bellis land description:
Twp 59 Rge 15 W4: LSDs 2, 7, 10, 15 of 11 (W/coulee), W11, S14, E15, N21, SW22 (SE/road), SW27, 28, 29, 32, S33

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Camping is also available at a government campsite on Highway 28 adjacent to the northern portion of the Natural Area. A self-guiding interpretive trail loop, which will introduce you to many of the different types of vegetation at the site, begins at the north end of this campsite.

There are a number of trails suitable for hiking. Many of these are vehicle trails that have been abandoned. The sandy soil provides a firm, easy walking surface, even after rain. Blueberry and bog cranberry picking sites are located in the Natural Area and the habitat diversity makes this site interesting to plant and bird-watchers alike.

A visit to Bellis Natural Area provides you with an interesting view of sand dune and wetland environments. It is a fragile landscape, however, and can only be conserved through careful use. Do not drive vehicles on the sandy trails and take all litter home with you. Help to keep Bellis Natural Area a beautiful and inviting place.

Hikers in the jack pine forest of Bellis Natural Area.

For More Information:

Public Lands Division, St. Paul	645-6336
Natural Areas Program, Edmonton	427-5209

12/91

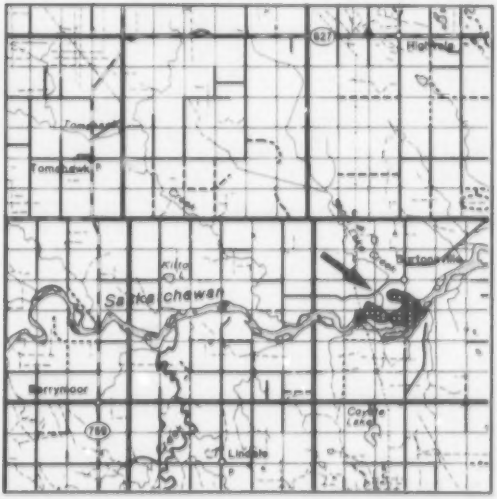
Boreal Forest

Burtonsville Island

Located 105 km west of Edmonton and 35 km northeast of Drayton Valley, a visit to this large island will give you the feeling you're really in "the wilds" of the North Saskatchewan River valley.

The flow of the North Saskatchewan River is constantly shaping Burtonsville Island Natural Area. The upstream end of the island is being gradually eroded. Sand and gravel are carried in the flow and deposited in bars at the downstream end of the island. Occasional flooding of Burtonsville can cause major changes in this floodplain landscape.

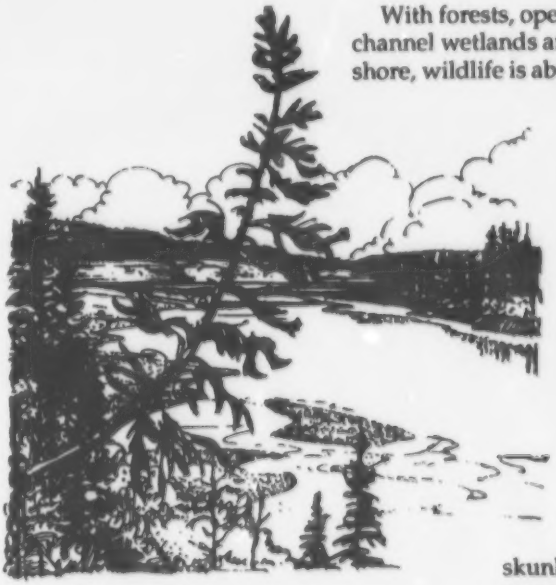
Burtonsville Island has a rich diversity of vegetation and wildlife, as do most riverine sites. Areas of mature forest contain large balsam poplar and white spruce above a dense tall shrub layer dominated by red osier dogwood. Mixed balsam poplar, white spruce and aspen forests occur throughout. Along the edges of active and older stabilized channels, there are willow and alder and early successional plants that colonize newly established landscapes such as river bars.



Burtonsville Island is located in the County of Parkland No. 31. Use Map Sheet 83 G/7.

Fc **Fd** **Fm** **Sh** **Gr** **We** **Rv** **Lk**

Burtonsville Island land description:
Twp 50 Rge 4 W5: Island in W15, 16, 17, SE20, 21, 22



Burtonsville Island in the North Saskatchewan River is densely treed with white spruce, aspen and balsam poplar.

With forests, open areas, channel wetlands and the river shore, wildlife is abundant. Songbirds, upland game birds, shorebirds, waterfowl, hawks and owls can be seen. Small mammals include red squirrel, muskrat, porcupine, skunk, mink and weasel. Beaver are abundant and active along the edges of the island. Large ungulates such as moose and white-tailed deer move along the river corridor, often stopping to browse and rest on Burtonsville Island.

Some hiking trails exist in the Natural Area. Outdoor education groups use Burtonsville Island for many different activities. It is a fine location to enjoy camping, cross-country skiing, snowmobiling, skating and hunting. If you visit this site, please ensure that your activities do not damage any of the natural features.

For More Information:

Public Lands Division, Drayton Valley	542-3537
Natural Areas Program, Edmonton	427-5209

12/91

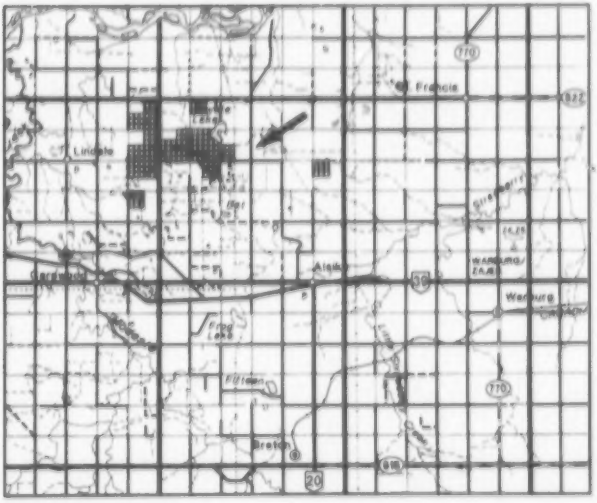
Boreal Forest

Coyote Lake

The Coyote Lake Natural Area is located approximately 14.5 km west of St. Francis and 10.5 km northwest of Alsike.

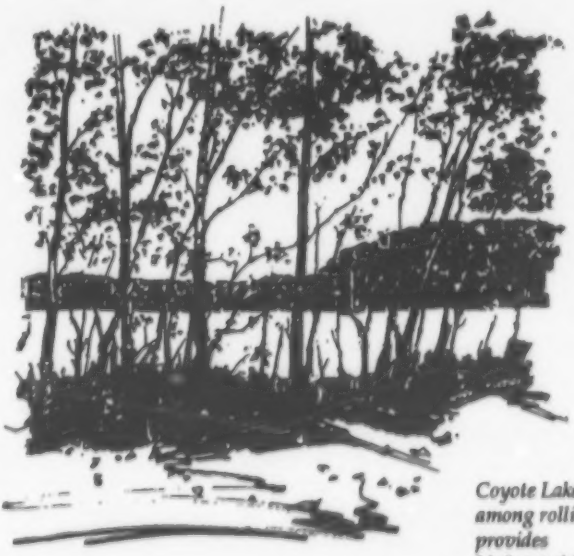
This area has a rolling topography with numerous depressions which are occupied by a variety of wetlands. Tamarack-black spruce-sphagnum peatland, willow-birch shrubland, sedge meadows and small sloughs are common. Upland vegetation consists of aspen and balsam poplar forest, with some areas of white spruce. The Natural Area has achieved distinction as the only known Alberta location for ducksmeal (*Wolffia columbiana*), a floating plant of the duckweed family.

Important breeding bird habitat provides excellent opportunities for bird-watching. Because the site contains features of the Boreal Forest, Parkland and Rocky Mountain Natural Regions, a wide variety of species are present.



Coyote Lake is in the County of Leduc No. 25. Use Map Sheets 83 G/1, G/2 & G/7.

Coyote Lake land description:
Twp 49 Rge 4 W5: NE20, NW24, SW28, 29, S & NE30, NW32;
Twp 49 Rge 5 W5: NW13, N24, NE25, S25, S & NE36



Coyote Lake, set among rolling hills, provides bird-watching opportunities.

Coyote Lake itself provides important feeding habitat for great blue heron; nesting habitat for red-necked grebe, common loon and ring-necked duck; and a significant resting site for a number of migrating waterbirds. Deer, elk, moose, coyote, black bear and beaver live in and use the Natural Area.

A visit to Coyote Lake Natural Area will allow you to explore forests and wetlands that are relatively undisturbed. Please ensure that your activities do not damage any of the natural features.

For More Information:

Public Lands Division, Drayton Valley	542-3537
Natural Areas Program, Edmonton	427-5209

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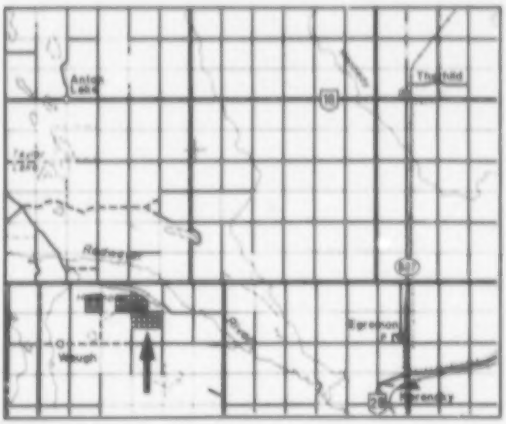
Boreal Forest

Halfmoon Lake

Located 40 km northeast of Edmonton, this Natural Area borders a portion of the south shore of Halfmoon Lake, and attracts recreational users in all four seasons.

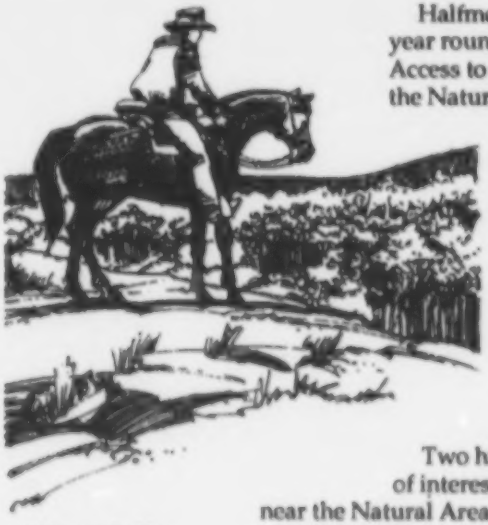
Halfmoon Lake Natural Area has diverse vegetation, and is home to abundant wildlife, including coyote, deer and moose. The sandy, rolling landscape is covered largely by open jack pine woods or mixed pine and aspen forest. Upland sites with more moisture support aspen-balsam poplar mixedwood forest, white spruce forest, alder shrubland and meadows rich with herbs. In the depressions are a variety of wetlands. Black spruce peatland, willow and dwarf birch shrubland and tamarack-birch swamp are all present.

This is a place where you can enjoy a number of different activities. Many bird species attract bird-watchers, and the site is interesting for plant enthusiasts and nature photographers. Berry pickers will find saskatoons, blueberries, raspberries and strawberries. Horseback riders and hikers can use the numerous trails in several seasons, and will enjoy the view from selected points along the trails. In winter, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, and sleigh riding (both dog- and horse-drawn) are favoured activities.



Halfmoon Lake is in the County of Thorhild No. 7 & the Municipal District of Westlock No. 92. Use Map Sheet 83 I/3.

Halfmoon Lake land description:
Twp 58 Rge 23 W4: N27, SE32, SE33, W34 (S/lake)



Rider overlooking Natural Area.

Halfmoon Lake is used year round for fishing. Access to the lake from the Natural Area is somewhat difficult, but there are trails leading to the water. The more adventureous will definitely find the trip worthwhile.

Two historical features of interest are located near the Natural Area. The Athabasca Landing Trail is a portage route established in the 1870s for horse-drawn carts travelling between the North Saskatchewan River at Fort Edmonton and the Athabasca River at what is now Athabasca. For several decades, all northbound goods and people travelled this trail. At Mile 42 of the Trail is St. Mary's Church. This historic site has informative signage and provides the best access to the Athabasca Landing Trail. The church is located at Waugh, approximately 1.6 km south and 1.6 km west of the southwest edge of the Natural Area. You can experience a bit of Alberta's history by visiting St. Mary's Church and taking a walk or horseback ride along the Athabasca Landing Trail.

The sandy terrain is very sensitive to disturbance and abuse, so when you are using Halfmoon Lake Natural Area, please take care to keep the site clean and ensure that your activities do not damage the natural features.

For More Information:

Public Lands Division, Barrhead	674-8231
Natural Areas Program, Edmonton	427-5209

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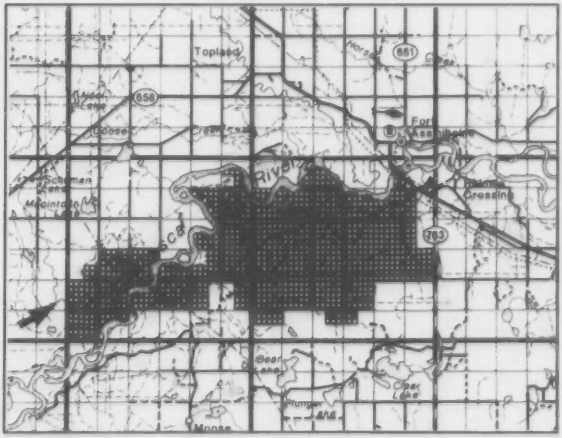
Boreal Forest

Holmes Crossing

Holmes Crossing Natural Area is located about 4 km southwest of Fort Assiniboine and borders the south bank of the Athabasca River. Its rolling landscape of stabilized sand dunes and wet depressions, along with the Athabasca River valley make this a diverse and interesting site.

Jack pine and aspen are the major tree species. They grow in pure stands or mixedwood forests on the upland sand dunes. In moister sites along the river valley, white spruce, aspen and balsam poplar dominate, and most are frequently part of mixedwood forests. A variety of wetlands occur in the depressions between the sand dunes. Willow shrubland, black spruce and tamarack peatland, sedge wetland and shallow ponds are all present.

Wildlife is abundant. Deer and moose use the river valley extensively. The undulating dune landscape provides ungulates with food and shelter, while the wetlands and ponds are particularly favoured by moose. Black bear, snowshoe hare, red squirrel and beaver are common. Bird species are numerous and in the pine forests are common nighthawk, solitary vireo, pine siskin and purple finch.



Holmes Crossing is in the County of Barrhead No. 11 & Improvement District No. 15. Use Map Sheets 83 J/2, J/3, J/6 & J/7.

Holmes Crossing land description:

Twp 61 Rge 6 W5: NW3, NE4, N6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, W24, W25, 26 (S/river), 27 (S/river), 28, 29, 30, SE31 (S/river), 32 (S/river), 33 (S/river), SE35 (S/river & road); *Twp 61 Rge 7* W5: NW4 (W/river), 5 (W/river), 6, 7, 8, S & NW9, 10, W11, E12, 13, S & NE14, 15 (S/river), 16, 17, SE18, 23 (E/river), 24, 25, 26 (E/river), N & SE36 (S/river)

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Holmes Crossing Natural Area is enjoyed by many visitors in all seasons. Activities include nature hikes, berry picking, picnicking, fishing, hunting, horseback riding, canoeing, gold-panning, cross-country skiing and snowmobiling. The fragile soils and vegetation of this site are very easily damaged and restrictions have been placed on where people may camp and where off-highway vehicles may be used. Please contact the Public Lands Office in Barrhead (phone 674-8231) for this information.

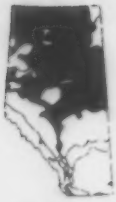
Explore Holmes Crossing Natural Area, but please ensure that your activities do not diminish the beauty of the site.

Jack pine are common trees on the stabilized sand dunes of Holmes Crossing Natural Area.

For More Information:

Public Lands Division, Barrhead	674-8231
Natural Areas Program, Edmonton	427-5209

12/91



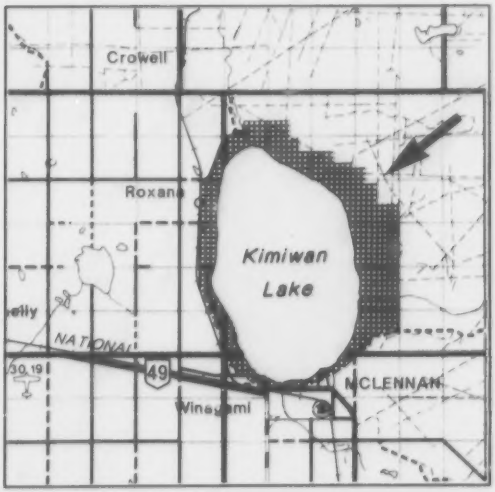
Boreal Forest

Kimiwan Lake

This Natural Area borders Kimiwan Lake, immediately north of the town of McLennan.

Kimiwan Lake is shallow, does not have a natural outflow and is susceptible to short-term fluctuations in water levels. The shore slopes very gradually and when water levels are low, there are large areas of exposed mudflats. Duckweed and algae are common in the shallow waters. A band of vegetation including bulrush, cattail and marsh ragwort occurs along the lake edge. On the uplands immediately adjacent to the lake are pastures and areas of aspen and white spruce-aspen forest. The southeast side of the lake supports wetlands in which black spruce peatland dominates and willow-sedge shrubland and tamarack peatland also occur.

Excellent bird-watching opportunities exist for you at the Natural Area. The most significant feature of Kimiwan Lake are the tens of thousands of migrating shorebirds, ducks, geese and swans that feed and rest there. The lake provides both a source of food and shelter. In years when water levels are low and extensive mudflats are exposed, the site is particularly important for shorebirds. When



Kimiwan Lake is in Municipal District No. 130 & Improvement District No. 17.
Use Map Sheets 83 N/10 & N/15.

Kimiwan Lake land description:

Twp 77 Rge 19 W5: LSDs NE7, N8, SE8, N11, N13, SE13 & 14 of 31, NE31, N32, LSDs 5, 6, 7, W8 & NE8 of 32, LSDs NW5, NW10, 15 & NW16 of 33, NW33 (exc. SE LSD 11); *Twp 78 Rge 19 W5:* N3, SW3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, N10, SE10, LSDs W4 & W5 of 10, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, S22, NW22, LSD 4 of 27, LSDs 11 & 12 of 28, S28, S29, NW29, LSDs 9, 10 & 15 of 29, 30, SE31, LSDs 3 & SE4 of 31, SW32; *Twp 78 Rge 20 W5:* LSDs N16 & SE16 of 1, NE12, LSDs 1, NE2, 7 & 8 of 12, SE13, LSDs 9, E10, E15 & 16 of 13, E24, E25(E/road)

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Shorebirds feed on the mudflats of Kimiwan Lake.

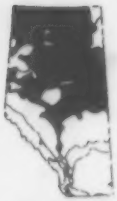
water levels are higher and the lake edge vegetation is flooded, the lake provides important waterfowl nesting habitat. Kimiwan Lake is the northernmost known breeding location for several bird species including the American avocet. American white pelicans have been sighted foraging in the Natural Area and hawks and eagles are often sighted above the lake.

Kimiwan Lake Natural Area is an exciting location for bird-watchers to visit, expecially during spring and fall migration. The south shore of the lake is easily accessible on foot from the town of McLennan, although extensive mudflats may prevent you from reaching the water's edge at certain times. Enjoy your visit to this Natural Area, but please ensure that your activities do not disturb the wildlife or damage the natural features of the site.

For More Information:

Town Office, McLennan	324-3065
Public Lands Division, High Prairie	523-6561
Natural Areas Program, Edmonton	427-5209

12/91



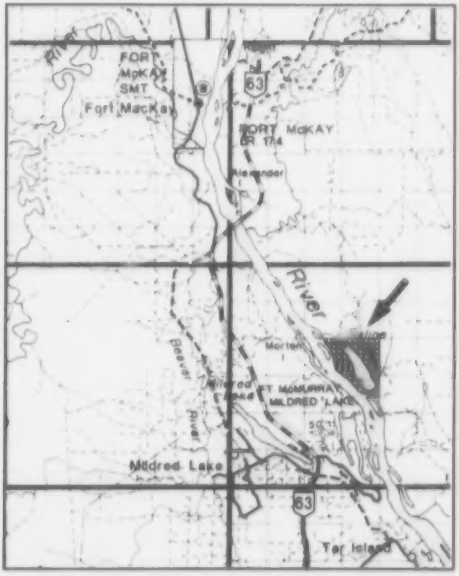
Boreal Forest

La Saline

La Saline Natural Area is located 40 km north of Fort McMurray on the east side of the Athabasca River. Because there are no developed trails to the Natural Area, the best access is by boat.

Saline Lake is an oxbow lake formed when the Athabasca River changed its course and cut off a bend from the main water flow. Silt was deposited at both ends of this backwater, and it was eventually sealed off completely from the main river channel. Saline Lake annually attracts many migrating ducks and geese, which travel the Athabasca River corridor on their way to northern nesting grounds such as the Peace-Athabasca Delta. The birds stop to rest and feed, and some stay to nest. This is the most productive waterbody in the vicinity in terms of the species and numbers of waterfowl it supports.

A special feature is the mineral-rich springs, which flow from a terrace on the river breaks to the lake 18 m below.



La Saline is in Improvement District No. 18. Use Map Sheet 74 E/4.

La Saline land description:
Twp 93 Rge 10 W4: N15 (E/river), E21 (E/river), 22 (E/river)

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Waters of the springs flow underground through limestone bedrock formations and bubble to the surface in the Athabasca River valley above Saline Lake. Limestone becomes dissolved in the flowing underground spring water, and it mixes with carbon dioxide in the water to form bicarbonate. When the water reaches the surface, carbon dioxide is released into the air, leaving behind calcium carbonate which forms a hard, crusty, white deposit known as tufa or travertine.

Over time, tufa accumulates and an extensive cone 3 m in diameter has developed at La Saline. The spring water bubbles on top of this cone, forming a shallow pool. The water flows across the cone and down the slope to Saline Lake. Tufa is deposited along the route of the water which flows down the embankment.

The springs at La Saline Natural Area contain high concentrations of dissolved salts. Sodium chloride is most plentiful. Tufa is the most abundant mineral deposit, but calcite, dolomite, quartz, gypsum, anhydrite, barite and sulphur are also present. Ungulates are attracted to the springs area, which they use as a mineral lick.

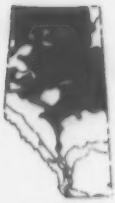
Adjacent to Saline Lake are wetlands containing plants that are tolerant of the mineral-rich waters. The natural features within La Saline Natural Area are quite different from those along the main channel of the Athabasca River, making this a special place to visit. Please ensure that your activities in the Natural Area do not damage any of the natural features.

Tufa deposit on the slope above Saline Lake.

For More Information:

Alberta Forest Service, Fort McMurray 743-7124
Natural Areas Program, Edmonton 427-5209

12/91



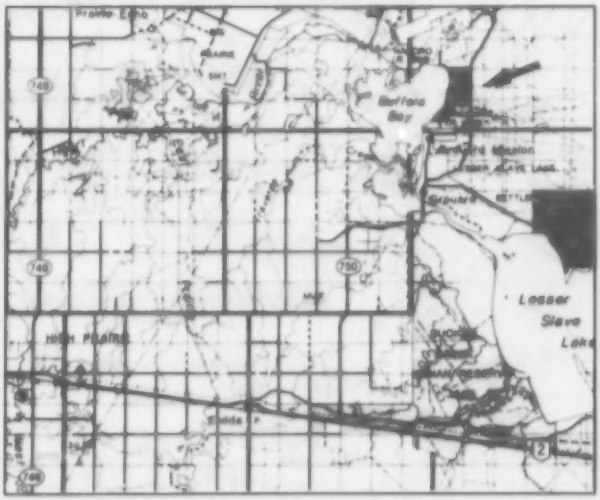
Boreal Forest

Police Point

Police Point Natural Area is located on Buffalo Bay, a waterbody connected by a narrow channel to the west side of Lesser Slave Lake. The Natural Area lies just north of Grouard Mission, on the east shore of the bay, and 40 km northeast of High Prairie.

An important historical feature of the Natural Area is a portion of the Grouard Trail. Fur traders and missionaries, and later settlers carrying their household belongings with them, travelled through this area on their way to the Peace River country. Beginning in 1799, the Grouard Trail was part of the network of rivers, lakes, portages and trails used by those moving north.

The Grouard Trail headed west from Athabasca Landing (now the town of Athabasca), followed the Athabasca River and the north shore of Lesser Slave Lake, then turned south along the east shore of Buffalo Bay to end at Lesser Slave Lake Settlement (now Grouard). Travel was difficult along this rough, and at times impassable, route.



Police Point is in Improvement District No. 17. Use Map Sheet 83 N/9.

Police Point land description:
Twp 76 Rge 14 W5: LSDs 5, 15 & 16 of 5, NW5 (not covered by lake), 6 (not covered by lake & N/road), 8 (not covered by lake)

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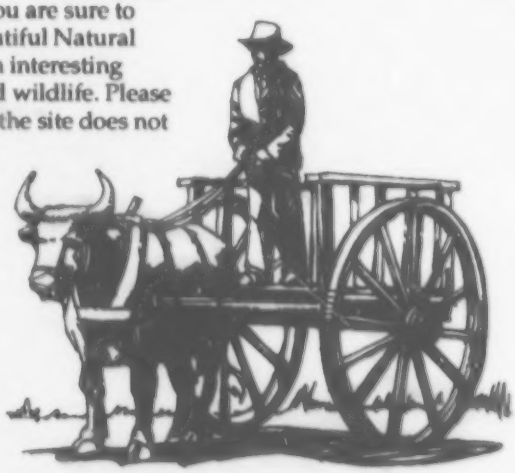
Today the Grouard Trail in the site is recognizable as a low ridge, flanked by ditches. Some of the original telegraph poles, now fallen, can still be found along the winding route.

Wetlands make up a significant portion of Police Point Natural Area. Marshy meadows occur along the edge of Buffalo Bay, as well as areas of black spruce peatland and willow swamp. A steep bank rises 30 m above the level of the bay in the south part. Mature mixedwood forest of aspen and white spruce covers the upland area.

Bird life is abundant. The marshes at the edge of Buffalo Bay are home to ducks, shorebirds, grebes, gulls and wrens. The upland forests contain mature trees and you will find pileated woodpecker, northern flicker and numerous vireos and warblers. The songbirds are usually quite secretive, but if you visit the site in spring, you will hear many species and may well catch a glimpse of them in the trees and shrubs.

The trails are excellent for hiking and cross-country skiing. You are sure to enjoy a visit to this beautiful Natural Area, which contains an interesting diversity of habitats and wildlife. Please ensure that your use of the site does not damage any of the natural features.



Settlers travelled by cart along the Grouard Trail, a section of which is located in Police Point Natural Area.

For More Information:

Public Lands Division, High Prairie	523-6580
Natural Areas Program, Edmonton	427-5209

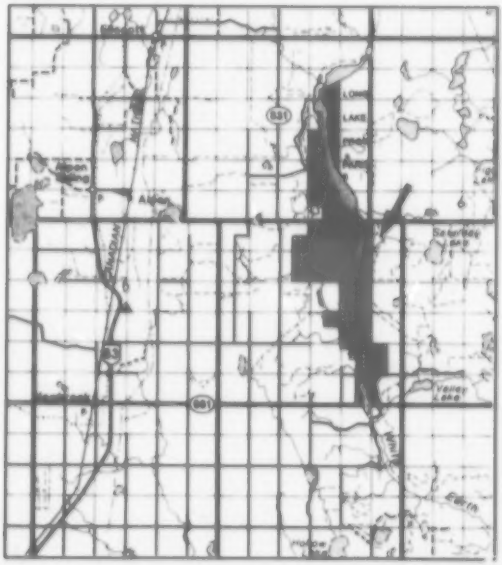
12/91

Boreal Forest

White Earth Valley

White Earth Valley Natural Area is located immediately south of Long Lake Provincial Park, near the towns of Thorhild and Newbrook, about 110 km northeast of Edmonton. It is in the valley of White Earth Creek and extends from Long Lake in the north to White Earth Lake in the south.

The Natural Area contains a variety of upland and lowland habitats. The upland forest along the valley is predominantly aspen and balsam poplar, with some mixedwood stands of white spruce, paper birch and aspen. Grassy meadows grow in forest openings on the valley slopes. Willow shrubland and sedge meadows occupy wet areas along White Earth Creek, and there are numerous beaver ponds.



White Earth Valley is in the County of Thorhild No. 7. Use Map Sheet 83 I/7.

White Earth Valley land description:

Twp 62 Rge 19 W4: W1 (W/road), LSDs 1, 2, 7, 8, 9, 10, E15 & 16 of 2 (excluding lake), E11 (excluding SW LSD 2), N & SE LSD 11, N LSD 13 & 14 of 11, SW12, NW12 (W/trail), 14, NE15, 23, 26 (excluding lake), 27, E28, SE33, 34, 35 (excluding lake)

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Wildlife is abundant in this relatively inaccessible and undisturbed site. The wetlands and ponds provide food and shelter for great blue heron, common loon and ducks, as well as moose, beaver, muskrat and mink. Mule and white-tailed deer travel the valley, grazing the hillside meadows. Black bear, gray wolf and coyote also use the Natural Area. Many songbirds can be found in the forests and wetlands.

You have excellent opportunities to hike and observe nature in this undisturbed setting. Both Long Lake and White Earth Lake provide good canoeing and fishing. The use of motorized vehicles is discouraged because the wetlands and valley slopes are sensitive to disturbance and erosion. Please ensure that your activities do not damage any of the natural features of this protected area.

Western wood lily grows in meadows, blooming in June and July.

For More Information:

Public Lands Division, Sherwood Park 464-7955
Natural Areas Program, Edmonton 427-5209

12/91

Rocky Mountain Region

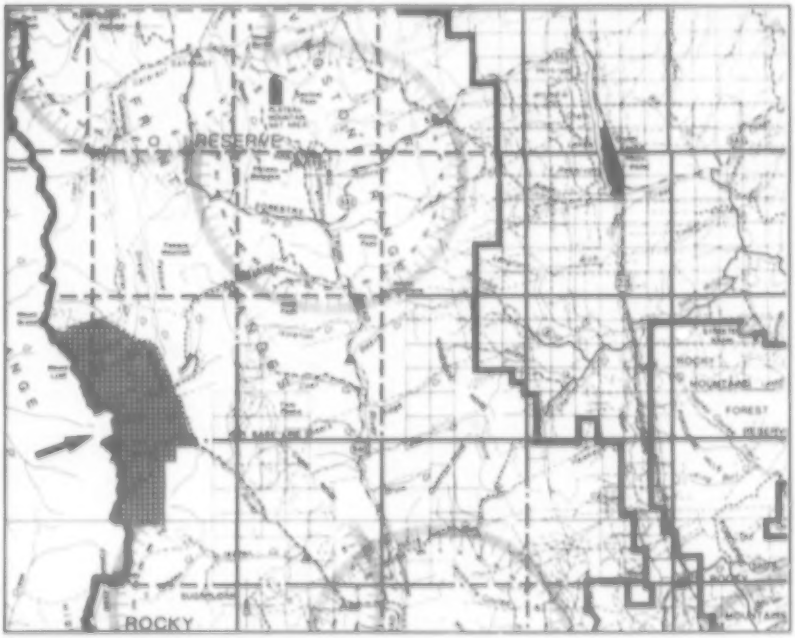
Beehive.... 86
Big Sagebrush.... 88
Canmore Flats.....90
East Porcupine.... 92
Wildcat Island.....94

Mount Yamnuska is located in the Bow Valley.

Beehive

Beehive Natural Area, while only about 100 km southwest of Calgary, is a jewel of wilderness landscape. This site is bordered on the west by the Continental Divide and on the east by the upper reaches of the Oldman River.

From the alluvial plains of the Oldman River, to the heights of Mounts Beehive and Lyall, there is a great diversity of habitats. Alpine tundra, cliffs and rockslides provide a backdrop for extensive old-growth spruce-fir forests. These forests may be over 1000 years old, with some trees in them as old as 300 years. Lodgepole pine forest, grassland and moist herb meadows are some of the other habitats. Rare plant species have been found in a number of locations.



Beehive is in Improvement District No. 6.
Use Map Sheets 82 G/15 & 82 J/2.

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Beehive land description:

Twp 12 Rge 5 W5: N16, N17, NE18, E19, 20, 21, 28, 29, NE30, N & SE31, 32, 33, LSD 5, 6, 11-16 of 34, LSD 13, 14 (W/river) of 35; *Twp 13 Rge 5 W5*: W2 (W/river), 3 (W/river), 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 (W/river), 15 (W/river), 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21 (W/river), SW22 (W/river), SW28 (S/river), S & NW29 (S/river), 30 (S/river); *Twp 13 Rge 6 W5*: E12, 13, 23, 24, 25 (S/river), 26 (S/river). All lands are East of B.C. border.

Old-growth forest at the base of Mt. Beehive.

The old-growth forests in Beehive provide excellent habitat for woodpeckers, warblers, pine marten and fisher. Grizzly and black bear, mule deer and Rocky Mountain goat have been seen here. Elk summer range and bighorn sheep lambing sites are within the Natural Area.

Backcountry recreation activities such as hiking, fishing and cross-country skiing can be undertaken in the Natural Area. The site's rugged terrain and remote location necessitate that care be exercised when visiting. Please be prepared for changeable mountain weather conditions. Beehive Natural Area protects an important part of Alberta's wilderness. Please ensure that your use of the site reflects a respect for the landscape and wildlife and does not damage any of the natural features.

For More Information:

Alberta Forest Service, Calgary	297-8800
Natural Areas Program, Edmonton	427-5209

12/91

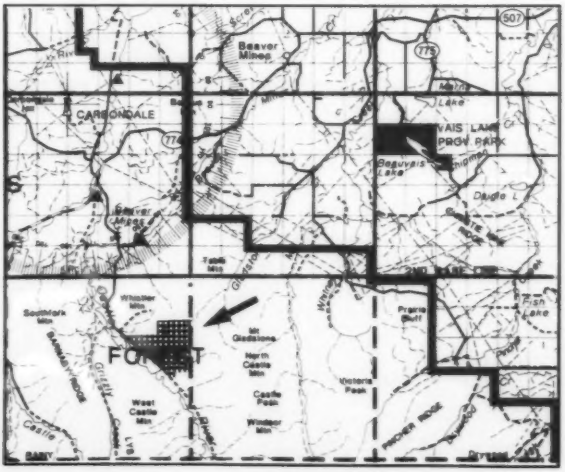
Rocky Mountain

Big Sagebrush

The Big Sagebrush Natural Area is located in the Rocky Mountains of southwestern Alberta, between the Crowsnest Pass and Waterton Lakes National Park. It is about 15 km southwest of Beaver Mines and 40 km southwest of Pincher Creek.

Located on the southwest slopes of Whistler Mountain above the Castle River, this site is most interesting for its vegetation. Lodgepole pine and alpine fir-lodgepole pine forests are common, as are rocky slopes with little plant cover. Poplar and willow thickets are found along stream channels. The most interesting vegetation, however, is the shrubland dominated by big sagebrush.

Big sagebrush is a rare plant in Alberta, and this site contains the largest population of the shrubs. Big Sagebrush Natural Area contains a diverse flora, with a number of other rare plants, including mariposa lily, Lyall's beardtongue, fringe-cups, Douglas stonecrop, sticky currant and snowbrush.



Big Sagebrush is in Improvement District No. 6. Use Map Sheet 82 G/8.

Big Sagebrush land description:
Twp 4 Rge 3 W5: LSDs 13 & 14 of 13 (N/road), 23 (N/road), 24 (E/road), S25

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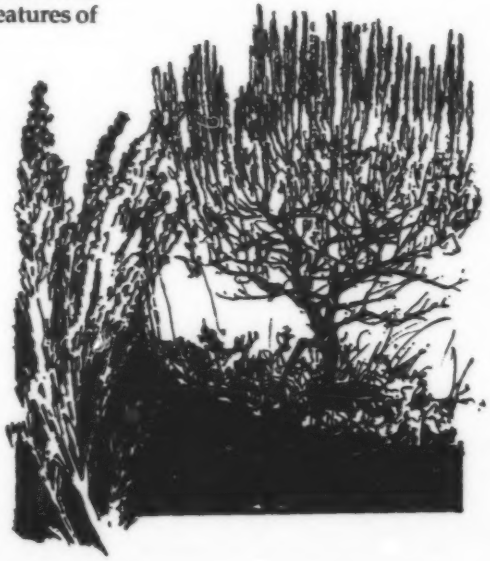
The sagebrush shrublands are used heavily by elk and mule deer in summer. Moose, bighorn sheep, grizzly and black bear can also be seen. Birds are numerous in the variety of habitats present. Common species include Clark's nutcracker, pine siskin, yellow-rumped warbler and purple finch. Rare species to watch for here include Lewis's woodpecker, Cassin's finch and red-naped sapsucker.

These big sagebrush shrublands have features which make them unique in both Canada and the United States, and they are most worthy of careful protection. Off-road vehicles and random camping can be very damaging to vegetation. If you visit the Big Sagebrush Natural Area, please ensure that your activities do not harm the plants or other features of the site.



Big sagebrush is a rare plant in Alberta, found only in the southwest portion of the province.

For More Information:

Alberta Forest Service, Calgary	297-8800
Natural Areas Program, Edmonton	427-5209

12/91

Rocky Mountain

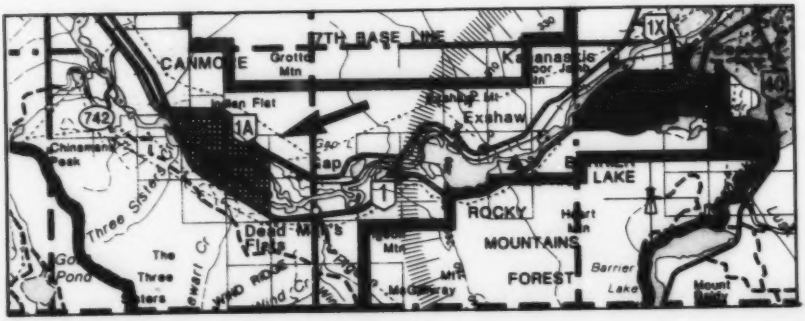
Canmore Flats

The Canmore Flats Natural Area is located between Highways 1 and 1A southeast of Canmore, on the floodplain of the Bow River. This site attracts people interested in recreation and environmental education from the Calgary and Canmore areas.

The Bow River flows through this site, and the channels, bars and terraces produced by its waters are constantly changing. The floodplain vegetation is quite varied. Tall stands of white spruce grow among the mixedwood forest which covers much of the site. In depressional areas – often inactive river channels – there are wetlands and dense willow shrubland.

A number of small creeks fed by calcareous springs are found throughout. These spring areas support a number of unusual plant species, and the associated creeks are important spawning areas for brown trout. One notable creek channel, unofficially named "Bill Griffiths Creek" supports the largest concentration of spawning brown trout in Alberta.

Canmore Flats is in Improvement District No. 8.
Use Map Sheet 82 O/3.



Canmore Flats land description:

Twp 24 Rge 10 W5: LSDs 13 & 14 of 14 (N/highway), E14 (N/highway), E22 (N/highway), W22 (E/highway & N/Plan 116 J.K.), 23 (S/railway), SW26 (S/railway), SE27 (S/railway), SW27 (S/railway & NE/Highway 1 [excluding MLL904 & MLL1609]), NW27 (S/railway & excluding MLL904 & MLL1609), SE 28 (E/highway & S/railway)

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The river is used by animals as a travel corridor, and the site is used by moose to browse, white-tailed and mule deer and occasional elk to forage, and other animals such as coyote and black bear to feed, water and rest. Bird species, including nesting osprey, are numerous in the varied habitats along the river floodplain.

The Canmore Flats Natural Area is well used by hunters, fishermen, hikers, canoeists and outdoor education groups. If you are a visitor to the Natural Area, please ensure that your activities have a minimal impact on the natural features, habitats and wildlife of the site.

Brown trout spawn in streams within Canmore Flats Natural Area.

For More Information:

Public Lands Division, Calgary	297-6426
Natural Areas Program, Edmonton	427-5209

12/91

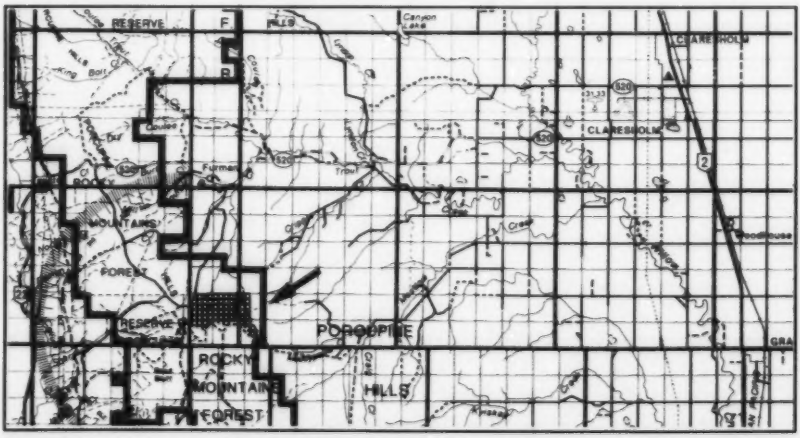
Rocky Mountain

East Porcupine

In the rolling landscape east of the Front Ranges of the Rocky Mountains is the East Porcupine Natural Area. The site is located approximately 33 km south and west of Claresholm at the south end of the main ridge of the Porcupine Hills. Trails in the central portion of the Natural Area are accessed by crossing ranch land, so if you wish to visit this part of the area, be sure to ask permission from the rancher.

There is considerable altitudinal range and topographic diversity in the landscape of this site. The montane forest of the southern Rockies, the subalpine forest of the mountains to the west, the boreal forest of the north, the aspen parkland of the foothills and the grassland of the prairies intermingle here to form a complex mosaic of vegetation types.

At the highest altitudes on north- or northeast-facing slopes, there is a forest of lodgepole pine, Engelmann spruce and alpine fir. Douglas-fir and Engelmann spruce forest is found in somewhat drier locations. Limber pine woodland occupies the driest,



East Porcupine is in Municipal District No. 26 & Improvement District No. 6. Use Map Sheets 82 G/16 & H/13.

East Porcupine land description:
Twp 11 Rge 29 W4: 6 (N/creek & S/ridge), W7 (W/ridge);
Twp 11 Rge 30 W4: N1 (N/ridge), N2 (N/ridge), 11 (E/road), 12

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south-facing slopes, where soils are shallow and rocky. Aspen stands are present throughout, and balsam poplar forest and willow-water birch wetland are found along the valley bottoms of the numerous creeks. A variety of lush grasslands contain numerous plants which grow only in the southwest portion of Alberta.

The great diversity of landscape and vegetation supports a variety of mammals, both large and small, and many bird species. Black bear, coyote, moose, elk and mule deer can be seen. There is good winter range for elk and deer because of the open grassy slopes, which provide food for the animals, and the nearby conifer forests, which provide shelter from the weather.

The East Porcupine Natural Area contains beautiful scenery and excellent opportunities for those interested in plant or animal watching. When travelling in the site, please show respect by closing gates, not littering and preventing damage to the natural features of the area.

Wild flowers abound in the lush grasslands of East Porcupine Natural Area.

For More Information:

Alberta Forest Service, Calgary	297-8800
Natural Areas Program, Edmonton	427-5209

12/91

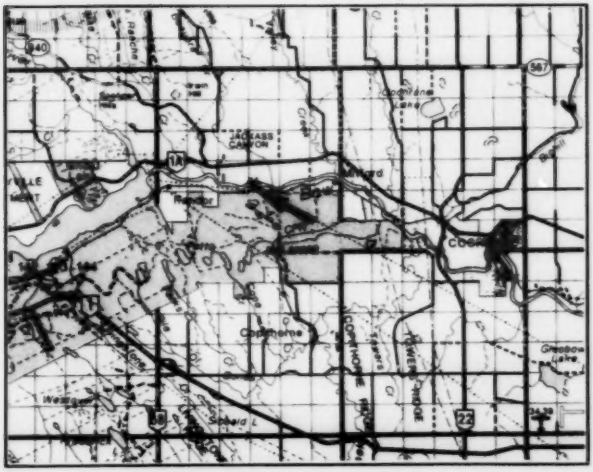
Rocky Mountain

Wildcat Island

Wildcat Island Natural Area is in the Bow River, 6 km downstream from the Ghost Dam and 11 km west of Cochrane. The site is a popular stopover for canoeists.

White spruce and scattered shrubs cover much of Wildcat Island. A thick layer of moss and creeping juniper covers the ground in most areas. Aspen and balsam poplar are also present and have been used extensively by beaver.

Wildcat Island and the river valley provide habitat for a variety of bird species. Sandstone cliffs are nesting habitat for cliff swallow, with hawks or falcons occasionally nesting on high ledges and bank swallow nesting in softer cliffs. Canada geese nest along the river's edge and fish-eating birds such as the common merganser, belted kingfisher and osprey can be seen. Rainbow trout and mountain whitefish, which are plentiful in the river near Wildcat Island, attract fishermen. Many people use the island as a base for a weekend of fishing.



Wildcat Island is in Municipal District No. 44. Use Map Sheet 82 O/2.

Wildcat Island land description:
Twp 26 Rge 5 W5: SW15 (island)

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If you visit Wildcat Island Natural Area, please keep in mind that the lands north and south of the river are leased or privately owned. Ask permission before using these lands and show respect by obeying all signs and closing all gates.

If you stop over or camp on the island, avoid littering or cutting down trees. Choose only dead and fallen material for firewood, not standing dead trees which are important habitat for some bird species, and ensure that your campfire is completely out before you leave. The soils and vegetation of Wildcat Island are fragile, so please ensure that your activities do not harm any of the natural features of this site.

Canoeists stop over at Wildcat Island Natural Area.

For More Information:

Public Lands Division, Calgary	297-6426
Natural Areas Program, Edmonton	427-5209

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